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LECTURES ON
ARABIC HISTORIANS

[DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA,
FEBRUARY 1929]

BY

D. S. MARGOLIOUTH, D.LITT., F.B.A.

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Dedicated

to

S. KHUDA BUKHSH,

Barrister-at-Law,

Interpreter of Indian Islam to Europe

and of European Orientalism

to India

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PREFACE

An eminent Orientalist, who had edited numerous Arabic texts, had the following remark and question addressed to him by a fellow-student : *I see, Professor, that you have printed a number of Arabic works; when do you intend to start reading them?* The present writer, who has translated and annotated many of the Arabic books which he has published, is unlikely to be questioned in this style; but something of the sort might be said about the seven volumes of Yaqut's *Dictionary of Learned Men*, most of which he has had the pleasure (and the labour) of editing twice, without translation, and with a minimum of notes, chiefly of the critical variety. When therefore he was invited to deliver a course of Lectures to the University of Calcutta, he regarded this as an opportunity for collecting and reproducing in English the information which Yaqut's work contains about the chief Arabic historians of the first four Islamic centuries, and adding thereto such observations as his study of these writers had suggested to him. Much of the contents will be familiar to Arabic scholars, but it may be hoped that the Lectures will be found to contain a fair proportion of fresh matter.

Oxford, July 1929.

D. S. M.

Owing to the distance it was not possible to send the author a proof for correction, whence some oversights may remain, which it is to be hoped the reader will excuse.

S. KHUDA BUKHSH.

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LECTURES ON ARABIC HISTORIANS

LECTURE I.

Conspectus of the Subject.

History is a subject which furnishes one of the most copious departments of Arabic literature. The German Arabist Wüstenfeld made a collection of Arabic historians belonging to the first millennium of Islam, and his numbers reach 590. It is likely that many have escaped him, who would have swollen this total. And many of their works are colossal in character. We are told that the historian Tabari (ob. 310 A.H.) proposed to dictate a historical work to his students : the number of leaves which he at first proposed to cover was 30,000; as the students held that life would not be long enough for the study of such a work, he reduced the number to one-tenth, 3,000 leaves, which corresponds fairly with the bulk of the work in the editions of Leyden and Cairo. This composition left him time for a work of similar bulk on the Qur'an, which also is said to be one-tenth of the amount originally contemplated. For the active period of his life the average amount which he wrote was 40 leaves a day; those who divided the leaves which he had

covered by the days of his life from the cradle to the grave found that he had written 14 leaves for each day of his existence. At one time he, his predecessor Jaḥiz of Basrah, and his successor Ibn Ḥazm of Cordova, counted as the most prolific of Arabic authors, but it is not clear that any of them had a right to this distinction. The titles of the works of Mada'ini (ob. 225), who comes near the commencement of the series of historians, fill more than five pages. Those of Ibn 'Asākir (ob. 571) start with a History of Damascus in a hundred volumes: the first draft of the work occupied 580 fasciculi, the later 800. But there follows a series of titles of works occupying a couple of pages, some of which were evidently bulky. And it is clear that Tabari's history, vast as it is, would not bear comparison in size with the History of Islam by Dhahabi in the eighth century of Islam.

Treating history on this vast scale has some obvious advantages, though it will be seen that in many cases the content bears no proportion to the magnitude of the work. The volumes are frequently swollen to their bulk by repetition of the same or nearly the same matter, as handed down by different chains of authorities. Thus a whole volume of Ibn 'Asākir might be reduced to a few pages (at most) if the reader were contented with a single chain of tradition for a single tradition. But even where the content corresponds with the magnitude it is evident that the cost of production must be excessive, whence few copies are likely to be made; occasional notices which we obtain of the price of books or the cost of copying show that few students

would be able to procure complete sets of such works. And when the owner of such a work dies, the volumes have a tendency to be distributed between the heirs. Hence in several of these cases the student thinks himself fortunate if by travelling to different cities he can make himself acquainted with all the volumes of such books.

Though Wüstenfeld's list terminates with the year 1000 A.H., it does not begin with the Prophet's death. Notices of prose literature assuming the form of written books prior to the 'Abbāsid period are vague and often untrustworthy With us the natural seat of a book is some material such as paper : it may or may not be committed to memory. With the Arab the natrual seat of a book is the memory : it may or may not be committed to writing. In the Qur'an there are indications that the seat of a book is regarded as the memory, notwithstanding the importance which is therein attached to writing. An abrogated text may be either erased or caused to be forgotten; it may be either written or merely remembered. We read there of clear texts in the breasts of those to whom knowledge has been given. The People of the Book are said to make "charts" of their sacred books : these then could and did exist apart from those "charts," and as such could be communicated to prophets by inspiration. We shall have occasion later on to notice the tenacity with which this conception held sway even when men were writing and amassing written books on a vast scale.

The reasons however which prevented the development of prose literature before 'Abbāsid times

and causes which overcame them will occupy some of our time to-morrow. What strikes us, in considering the colossal proportions to which historical literature grew, is the rapidity of this development. It is as if a mass of water which had been dammed up suddenly broke loose. One cause is likely to have been an invention to which justice has rarely been done in the history of progress, that of paper, which came into Europe through Muslim intervention. The Muslims had obtained it from the Middle East, and even in the first century of their era had taken to its employment and manufacture The invention, as cheapening the process of production, is to be compared with that of printing.

But Islam itself, with the advent of the 'Abbāsids, and the foundation of its great capital Baghdad, seems to have burst its bonds. It is not indeed clear that the Umayyad standards of piety and morality were greatly altered for the better by the change of dynasty. But the welcome which the new dynasty received is easily intelligible, since the antagonism between the Umayyad house and that of the Prophet was too deeply rooted to permit of loyalty to both. We are told casually how the pious 'Umar, son of 'Abd al-'Aziz, abolished the practice of cursing ' Ali from the pulpit : and the Shi'ah venerate his memory on that account. Yet such a concession to sentiment may have had as serious consequences in shaking the power of the Umayyads as the recovery of Napoleon's ashes had in shaking the French Kingdom. And when we read how in Umayyad times men did not venture to name their sons 'Ali, Ḥusan or Ḥuasin it does not

surprise us that the earliest Biography of the Prophet should be later than the rise of the 'Abbāsids. The Biography of the Prophet could scarcely have been told in Umayyad times without seriously shaking the loyalty of Muslims to their rulers : and the sequal would not have improved the situation. If men were afraid to call their sons 'Ali, Ḥusain or Ḥussain and were accustomed to hear 'Ali cursed from the pulpit, the less they heard about the beginnings of Islam, the more likely would they be to maintain their loyalty.

It is desirable to find some principles upon which we can classify this vast literature, and these may be furnished by our conception of what history means. We need not indeed occupy ourselves with the question how it should be written : on that abstruse subject many different theories have been propounded. All would probably agree that it is a record of events : and that events are chiefly, though not exclusively, the sayings and doings of men. And we may obtain some principles of classification from this definition.

First from the amount covered in space and time. There are universal histories and particular histories. Tabari's work is a universal history, at any rate in intention. Hence he commences with a definition of time and a theory of the length of time which the world has lasted. Its title is Chronicle of Apostles and Kings. When he reaches the rise of Islam, he confines himself to the portion of the world embraced by Islam. And other professedly universal historians adopt the same plan.

Historians whose programme is less ambitious restrict themselves to the Islamic portions of the earth or to some one or other of these portions: or to some period whether of Islamic history as a whole or of some Islamic state. Thus we have Dhahabi's History of Islam to which reference has been made, histories of countries such as Egypt, Spain, the Maghrib, or cities such as Mecca, Medinah, Damascus, Nisabur, Hamadhan, Herat; or of dynasties such as Khazraji's history of the Rasulids in Yemen, or Abu Shameh's of the two dynasties of Nur-al-din and Ṣalah-al-din.

Another principle of classification would be connected with the persons who take part in the events. This department would rather be termed biography than history, but the line which separates the two is often faint. Where the person whose career is recorded is a sovereign, the distinction vanishes: since the sovereign is the state according to the famous saying of Louis XIV, his biography is the history of his time. And since the states whose history is recorded were with scarcely an exception autocracies, the continuous histories find their natural division into sections by the succession of sovereigns. Where the title of such a work is simple, not fanciful, it frequently implies this: Tabari's work is, as has been seen, a chronicle of Apostles and Kings: and such titles as Chronicle of the Caliphs, or Story of the Caliphs, are quite common. Nor is the distinction between biography and history much more distinct when the subject is not a sovereign but a plenipotentiary minister, such as many of the viziers were. The life of the good

Vizier, 'Ali b. 'Isā, recently issued by Mr. Bowen, is really a history of the reign of Muqtadir: for though it was in the power of this Caliph to appoint and dismiss ministers according to his caprice, the minister during his enjoyment of power was responsible for all the departments of the state. Indeed the great authority on Constitutional Law regards the procedure whereby a sovereign delegates his authority to a minister as normal. Hence the works which narrate the lives of the viziers must be regarded as histories of their times. Of the numerous works which dealt with this subject we possess two in fragmentary form, and others may be brought to light. If they differ from the chronicles in form, it is owing to the tendency of the Arabic biographers to furnish strings of anecdotes in no chronological order instead of following the better practice of narrating events in the order of their occurrence.

Where the biographies are of persons less intimately connected with public affairs, they are not to be classed unconditionally with history, but the modern student of that subject cannot afford to neglect them, if besides following the kings in their external and internal struggles, their matrimonial alliances, and their enactments, he would also wish to understand something of the life and occupations of the people over whom they ruled. And the biographical literature of the Arabs was exceedingly rich: indeed it would appear that in Baghdad when an eminent man died there was a market for biographies of him somewhat as is the case in the capitals of Europe in our time; and where a man's per-

sonality had for some reason impressed itself on the public mind, or his literary works had attained the rank of classics, numerous biographers would arise. Biographies of living men were doubtless rare, but we have an example of one in the work by Abu Ḥayyān Tauḥīdī on the two viziers Ibn al-'Amīd the Second, and the Sāḥib Ibn 'Abbad of which large extracts have been preserved by Yaqut, whereas there is reason for believing the whole work to be still in existence. It was to have been printed in Constantinople: but the same policy which compelled the Ottoman journalists to conceal the assassination of President McKinley, forbade the publication of a work wherein a vizier was attacked. Moreover the work had the reputation, like some others, of bringing ill-luck.

The literature which consists in collected biographies is abnormally large, and it is in consequence easier for the student of the history of the Caliphate to find out *something* about the persons mentioned in the chronicles than in any analogous case. Some authors collect biographies of eminent men of all sorts: the work of Ibn Khallikan is familiar, and of a work on a far vaster scale some two centuries later many volumes are in existence. More frequently these collectors confine themselves to a particular group of persons—poets, physicians, jurists of some particular school, Readers of the Qur'an, Traditionalists and the like. Or they deal with persons conspicuous for some quality or practice, such as Misers or Parasites.

Some four methods or arrangement may be distinguished in these works. The first may be des-

cribed as arbitrary, such as we find in that great storehouse of historical information, the Aghani, where the clue to the order is a collection of a hundred odes set to music ordered by one of the Caliphs: this leads to a series of narratives connected with the poets and the musicians. A second method is the geographical. The collector makes his principle of arrangement the countries to which the persons with whom he deals belong. Famous examples are the *Yatimah* of Tha'ālibi, where the poets are grouped according to their countries, and the 'Uyūn of Ibn Abi Uṣaibi'ah, where the like is done with the physicians. A third principle is the chronological. Works of this sort are called *Ṭabaqāt*, Layers or Classes. The subjects are dealt with by generations. Notable cases of this method are the Ṭabāqāt al-Huffāz, Classes of Traditionalists by Dhahabi, and the Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah, Classes of Shaf'i doctors by Subki. A fourth principle, and in some respects the most convenient, is the alphabetical, which is followed by Yākūt.

Probably the Ṭābāqāt arrangement is that which serves the historical student best: here we have continuity, which is the essence of history. It is clearly superior to the geographical arrangement, for though the Islamic world was very early divided into different states, some of which had little connexion with each other, there was great community of studies. A common language, a common religion, and a common literature connected Spain and Egypt with Syria and Iraq, even when political ties had been snapped, with no prospect of reunion. Learned men, poets, and professional men

travelled from one Islamic country to another, and settled either temporarily or permanently wherever they had the best prospect of success. There are indeed adages which magnify the evils of exile: but many more speak of it as the road to success. The most famous of all the Arabic poets, Mutanabbi, is unable to remain long in any country: Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Persia all provide him for a time with patrons. Hence the geographical arrangement attaches too much importance to what is an accident. Those who follow the alphabetical arrangement are inclined to make some sacrifices, if not to continuity, at any rate to similarity or some other connexion between their subjects. Ibn Khallikan makes considerable sacrifices to this consideration and Yāqūt makes some.

Thirdly it is possible to divert attention from space and persons to events as such. We shall see that the earliest form of historical narrative followed this principle. The early history of Islam was a collection of events, recorded by one or more eye-witnesses: the Murder of 'Uthman, the Battle of the Camel, the Battle of Siffin, the Arbitration, the Conquests of the different countries, furnished isolated narratives, afterwards strung into continuous history. Monographs, as we should call them, on these and other events, continued to be written long after continuous histories had become normal. And it is possible to treat events not only as memorable in themselves, but as illustrating some principle whether of human nature or of the government of the world. This conception furnishes us with great numbers of works of *collectanea*, memoirs, *memora-*

bilia, and the like; few languages are richer in literature of the sort. Frequently there is no attempt at arranging the matter. It is noticeable that in Tanukhi's two works of this type the smaller follows a principle of arrangement, the larger professedly follows none. His "Deliverance after Stress" is divided into sections which deal with groups of cases where men unexpectedly were delivered from pressing danger: such as deliverances from wild beasts, from robbers, after veridical dreams, etc. His vaster work, of which only two volumes have as yet come to light out of eleven, the "Collection of Histories" or "Chewing of the Cud of Conversation" intentionally mixes matter dealing with a vast number of classes: the author thinks the attention of the reader will be more easily held if uniformity is avoided. Yet he does not quite succeed in keeping similar matters apart. Further it would appear that there is in this work something resembling the principle whereon the *musnad* is arranged, *i.e.*, the grouping of the material according to the authority from whom it emanated.

Attention may be called to three characteristics which this literature displays.

1. *Independence.* When literary composition began on the scale which has been noticed, there were numerous departments wherein foreign models were employed. Arab writers rarely conceal their obligations: they acknowledge them in their medicine, their mathematics, and their philosophy. All these branches of literature start with translations from the Greek: and those who pursue them seem never to tire of translating and commenting on the

ancient texts. There is a MS. in Paris which contains four separate translations of the same Aristotelian treatise. There were suspicions abroad that those who professed this foreign learning were not themselves adepts at it: we have more than one story of malicious persons framing mock questions in philosophy which the philosophers mistook for serious questions and attempted to solve. At different periods the foreign learning was regarded with awe and with horror. That it was foreign in origin was not disputed. That the literature of fable was derived from India through Persia was also admitted: it found some, possibly numerous, imitators. In the case of grammar it is difficult to reject the apparent connexion with Syriac studies in this region which in their turn were based on Greek studies: some have even found a trace of Greek origin in the name whereby the Arabs designate grammar, though this seems far-fetched.

Greek literature does indeed show parallels to perhaps all the departments of history which have been enumerated. The Greeks had universal histories, histories of countries and cities, biographies of persons and classes of persons, collectanea and memorabilia similar in character to those which Arabic literature developed. Yet there seems to be no trace of any translation of a Greek historian into Arabic: those histories which count in Europe as models of historical writing are unknown to the Arabic bibliographers. Even Syriac historians, whose works might well have interested those who were engaged in archaeological study, seem to have been neglected. Possibly Persian chronicles, such as

seem to have existed in Biblical times, may have been utilized for Persian history, but for the earlier centuries such employment is obscure. Arabic history seems to be independent of these works and to grow up before our eyes. For reasons which will occupy us later it has no continuity with earlier chronicles, but is a natural growth, brought into existence by the needs of the community and displaying characteristics of its own.

Secondly the authors are very rarely official historians, whose duty it is to record what the government wants them to record. Tabari and others mention cases wherein literary works were ordered by Caliphs, such as the collection of ancient lays ordered by al-Mahdi, and the manuals of the four orthodox systems ordered by al-Qadir. They do not seem to mention a case of a historical work ordered by a Caliph, though they record some wherein such works were discouraged or forbidden. A case of an official chronicle is that of the *Taji*, called after *Tāj al-Millah*, one of 'Aḍud al-daulah's titles, composed by the famous Secretary of State Ibrahim the Sabian. This person, as Secretary to 'Izz al-daulah Bakhtiyar, second Buwaihid Emir of Baghdad, had composed letters which gave grave offence to his cousin 'Aḍud al-daulah, who after his father's death attacked him and ousted him from his throne. Although Ibrahim had merely acted as his employer's clerk, and so was not responsible for the sentiments which his letters contained, but merely for their expression, 'Aḍud al-daulah demanded atonement for the offence of composing them, and the atonement suggested was that he

should write an official history of the Buwaihid dynasty. Much of this work is said to be embodied in Miskawaihi's history, but the original has not yet been recovered, though some fragments of it are preserved in the Yatimah of Tha'alibi and the Ta'rikh Yamini of 'Utbi. Asked by some visitor what he was doing, Ibrahim when engaged on this work replied: "Compiling packs of lies:" a statement which when it reached 'Aḍud al-daulah's ears so infuriated him that he was with difficulty prevented from executing Ibrahim in terrible fashion. The work before publication was revised by 'Aḍud al-daulah himself. The Ta'rikh Yamini or story of Yamin al-daulah's campaigns in India by 'Utbi may also be classed with official histories: and the same may be said of the bombastic account of Salaḥ al-din's reconquest of Jerusalem by his Secretary 'Imad al-din Ispahani, who gave his work the boastful title 'The Qussite Victory on the Qudsite Victory,' *i.e.*, the triumph of eloquence on the taking of Jerusalem.

A series of official chronicles of the Caliphate would not have been destitute of value: but such works have a tendency to be jejune and untrustworthy, as they confine themselves to what the sovereign wishes to have recorded.

For the most part the Arab historians write for the instruction of their countrymen, and though they at times are influenced by religious or patriotic bias, their general impartiality is a striking feature of their work. We could have no better illustration of this than the history of Miskawaihi. He was during the whole of his career in the employ of

viziers of the Buwaihid Sultans, Muhallabi vizier of Mu'izz al-daulah and Ibn al-'Amid vizier of Rukn al-daulah; then directly in the employ of 'Aḍud al-daulah himself and his son Baha al-daulah: it might have been expected that he would refrain from censorious comment on the actions of these Sultans, since in spite of the serious quarrels which arose in the second generation the honour of the family was involved in the deeds of the founders. There is no trace of any such partiality in Miskawaihi's work. The persons on whom he bestows eulogies which perhaps are excessive are the viziers Muhallabi and Ibn al-'Amid, long dead when his history was produced; the tale of the founders of the dynasty is told with no attempt at concealing their crimes, and in the case of Mu'izz al-daulah vehement condemnation of them. His estimate of 'Aḍud al-daulah is judicial: he calls attention to the merits of his administration, due, he thinks, to the instruction of Ibn al-'Amid I; and hopes that the services which he rendered to the state will be some counterpoise to the crimes of which he was guilty. To Rukn al-daulah he attributes certain virtues, which it seems this Sultan possessed; but he charges Rukn al-daulah with sacrificing the interests of his subjects to a Quixotic sense of loyalty to his friends. He makes something of a hero of Abu'l-Haija, a member of the Ḥamdanid family, which was constantly in feud with the Buwaihids. It is curious that the encomium passed by Abu Shuja' two centuries later on 'Aḍud al-daulah is enthusiastic, whereas Miskawaihi, who served him, is so calm and judicial.

Tabari is more of a collector of traditions than a historian, but his work is characterized by similar want of partisanship. If he expresses admiration for the military talents of Mu'taḍid, it seems clear that it was earned; though he wrote under that Caliph, his work exhibits nothing comparable to the adulation of Ibn al-Mu'tazz. One might have expected that the 'Abbāsid Caliphs would have been jealous of their ancestors' honour, whence it would have been desirable to conceal their weaknesses or declensions from the paths of virtue: but it would be difficult to show evidence of this motive working in Tabari's Chronicle.

The reason must be found in the fact that most of these writers composed their histories not as court chroniclers, but as persons whose tastes led them to pursue studies of this kind. Tabari himself was a landed proprietor, whose father had enabled him in the earlier part of his life to travel far and wide in order to acquire the knowledge which he afterwards utilized in lectures and compilations: he lived afterwards on rents which used to be brought him by the pilgrim caravans from Tabaristan, where his estates were. The historian Dinawari was a judge, the profession also followed by Tanukhi. Several historians, such as Miskawaihi and Hilal belonged to the *Katib* estate: they were employed in public bureaux. Abu Shuja' was a retired vizier.

Ribera has called attention to the fact that there was no public organization of education till the time of the Seljuqid vizier Nizam al-Mulk, founder of the Nizamīyah College; till then educa-

tion was left to private enterprise. With this we may combine the fact that the writing of history was also in the main left to private enterprise. We might call the historians professors of history in the etymological sense of the word: persons who undertook to provide information on the subject, not persons who were engaged by some person or body to provide it. And, as we have seen and shall have further occasion to observe, they were in the first place teachers, and more or less accidentally writers.

Where the historian was not a man of private means, it would seem that he could count on remuneration from students who desired to have access to information which he could provide, though on this matter our authorities are curiously uncommunicative. We have however enough in the way of allusions to make it clear that the instruction given by those who formed circles in the Mosques or held classes in their own homes was normally remunerated; though occasionally wealthy teachers like the theologian Jubba'i furnished students with the means to attend out of their private resources.

Thirdly we note certain methods devised by the Arabic historians for ensuring accuracy in the record of events. One is dating them by the year and month, and even the day. The historian of Civilization, Buckle, states that this practice in Europe is not earlier than 1597 A.D. Among Arab historians we find it developed in Tabari and an earlier author, al-Haythan b. 'Adi, born 130 A.H., is credited with a history arranged in order of years. For such a purpose an era was necessary, and it is

asserted that the practice of dating by the Prophet's *Hijrah* was introduced by the second Caliph. The record of year and month is found in one of the pre-Islamic chronicles to which attention will soon be called. According to Jawliqi, who collected the foreign words introduced into Arabic, the name for history *ta'rikh* means properly "assigning the month," being an Arabic formation from the Syriac word for "month" It is curious that this should be so, for though the substantive is not found in the Arabic of the North, its analogue is used in the dialect of the South, and indeed in the form *wārekh*, which should give *taurīkh*. The same group of letters is found in a Phoenician inscription, some centuries earlier than our era, where some scholars render it by "date;" the text is however too imperfect to enable us to assign it a certain signification. If the Arabic word really means "assigning the month," it is more likely that it is to be traced to the old Arabic *wārekh* than to the Syriac, and the change from *w* to *hamzah* is not without parallels. But it might be conjectured that the word is foreign and means "years," or "annals."

Of course neither the Greek nor the Roman historians, nor the Biblical writers keep quite clear of dates : and the Roman historians have a fixed era which is less clumsy than the Greek system. It is clear that the Islamic Calendar, though defective in the extreme for purposes of administration, was singularly well suited for the recording of events, since the number of the days in each year was accurately fixed, and the months were perfect luna-

tions, without intercalation. And since the Muslim year is not a revolution of the sun, as the ancients would have called it, but a group of twelve lunations, it must be admitted that the term "monthing" for dating is singularly appropriate.

The second expedient for securing exactitude is the *isnad*, the chain of authorities whereby a narrative can be traced to the original eye-witness who narrated it. In the case of the sayings and doings of the Prophet this study has furnished a science: it consists in testing the links whereby each tradition has reached the men of any age. From this study many others have diverged: one who reads the geographical dictionary of Yaqūt must perceive that the real function of his gazetteer is to enable the traditionalist to trace each transmitter of traditions to his home. Sam'ani's great work on *ansāb*, the meaning of *nisbahs*, is an aid to the tracing of traditionalists. And by similar ways the study of history diverges from that of Tradition: at the first the students of both were identical: gradually history becomes a distinct discipline, and the akhbārī becomes a different person from the *muḥaddith* and it may be added, inferior to him in estimation. Yet the notion that each narrative, in order to be trustworthy, should be traceable through a known series of transmitters to its source pervades historical composition till quite late times. There are books of which the content seems so frivolous that one marvels at the trouble taken to record the name of each transmitter and the date and place at which he heard the narrative; an example is the Maṣāri'al-'Ushshaq of al-Sarraj, a collection of cases wherein men or

women are supposed to have died of love, where the author records with minute accuracy the date at which he heard the story and gives similar details for the transmitters. There are books in the same style of which the statements are so clearly mendacious that one marvels at the audacity of the fabrication. But though the theory of the *Isnad* has occasioned endless trouble, owing to the inquiries which have to be made into the trustworthiness of each transmitter, and the fabrication of traditions was a familiar and at times easily tolerated practice, its value in making for accuracy cannot be questioned, and the Muslims are justified in taking pride in their science of tradition. In other ancient records we have to take what is told us on the author's assertion: it is rare that a Greek or Roman historian tells us the source of his information. German researchers especially have written much on "criticism of the sources," endeavouring to trace the narratives of Biblical writers and others to the materials whence they were obtained. Where those materials no longer exist, such endeavours can at best provide plausible hypotheses. In the works of Ṭabari, Baladhuri and Tanukhi the writers themselves spare us this trouble. And those who are interested in the narratives rather than anxious about their source ordinarily pass over the *Isnad*.

That many causes combined to frustrate the efforts of those who tried to secure accuracy in this way may be admitted. First of these is the untrustworthiness of the human memory, of which even persons famed for their retentiveness furnish examples. Secondly the diffi-

culty which many find in observing accurately and distinguishing between fact and the product of the imagination: whence Nietzsche asserted that uncivilized man lives a kind of dream life, wherein fancy furnishes in explanation of experiences pictures which have no relation to reality. Thirdly the notion that something actually happened because in the narrator's opinion it ought to have happened affects the veracity of many a recorder of events. Reconstruction of ancient history is often even in our own time and in critical Europe conducted on this principle. Fourthly among the countless transmitters of traditions there was a proportion of unscrupulous persons, who perverted or fabricated intentionally. Nevertheless the veracity of the most eminent among the Arab historians attains a high stardard and renders their works of great service to humanity.

LECTURE II.

Pre-Islamic History.

That Arabic history owes nothing to Greek history and little, if anything, to Persian history, seems clear: but it also appears to be independent of pre-Islamic Arabian chronicles. We have the dictum "Poetry is the diwan of the Arabs," *i.e.*, the register of their deeds: this was the record of the Days of the Arabs, *i.e.*, the battles between the tribes. That dictum which appears to be fairly early, implies that there were no other chronicles for the Hijaz: and this is confirmed by the evidence of the Qur'an, which frequently charges the Meccans with illiteracy. Pre-Islamic inscriptions in the Arabic which the Qur'an rendered classical are extremely rare: so rare that they seem rather experiments at writing a language which was not used for that purpose than examples of a familiar practice: for one of these is in another Semitic script. The Nabataean texts found by Doughty in Northern Arabia are in an Aramaic dialect curiously mixed with Arabic words and idioms. There is a near approach to classical Arabic in certain confessional tablets found in S. Arabia in the Himyari or old Arabic script; otherwise the copious epigraphic finds made by explorers in N. Arabia belong to other dialects, and are of great interest for the variety of the

scripts employed, but scarcely indicate the existence of literature.

Nor indeed does the character of the pre-Islamic legends embodied in such works as Azraqi's History of Meccah, Tabari's and Yaqut's pre-Islamic histories, and the vast collections preserved in the Aghani indicate the existence of anything worthy to be called a chronicle. Even documents professedly belonging to this period, which are sometimes produced, arouse a good deal of suspicion. One such document is inserted in his Chronicle by the historian Dinawari. Near the end of the Umayyad period one Kirmani wrote to a descendant of Abrahah ibn al-Sabbah, the last (he says) of the Himyari Kings, who dwelt in Kufah, asking him for a copy of the treaty between Rabi'ah and Yemen in pagan times, and this person sent him a copy: which Kirmani read out in public to the notables of Rabi'ah and Yemen. The document is in rhymed prose and contains allusions to various pagan ceremonies, though it starts with the invocation "In the name of Allah the Exalted, the mightiest, the glorious, the beneficent." and calls to witness "God the Highest, who doeth what He will." The king before whom the treaty was written is called Tubba' son of Malkikarib: it does not state what his relation to the confederates was.

Dinawari's history is, as will presently be seen, a work of little authority, hence this document may not be much older than the historian, as seems to be the case with many of the verses and letters with which he illustrates his narrative: indeed there are justifiable doubts whether the ascription of the work

itself to Dinawari is correct. The historical difficulties which attach to the document are very considerable, even though its archaeology may be correct, when it states how the blood of the confederating tribes was mixed with wine, and drunk by both parties, and their nails and forelocks clipped, and these relics collected in a sack and sunk in deep water: for there is evidence for the employment of such rites in the solemnization of treaties. But the employment of classical Arabic in rhymed prose which is faultless is most surprising in such a document. We should expect it to be in one of the dialects in use for monuments till near the rise of Islam. And similar doubts exist in other cases wherein pre-Islamic compositions in prose are produced by historians or archaeologists. In this case it is noticeable that the place where the treaty was ratified is not mentioned, though this would seem to be a matter of importance. The month *al-aṣam*, a name applied to Rejeb, is mentioned, but not the year.

If by any chance the document were genuine, many of our notions would have to be revised: for the historian does not speak of this treaty as a unique example of such a document being preserved from Pagan times, but as though it were quite natural that such pre-Islamic deeds should be preserved somewhere: and from a collection of such treaties certain and to some extent continuous of history might be put together. The historians of this period do not indeed complain, as Moses of Khorene the Armenian historian complains, that chronicles are wanting: they are too firmly convinced that the

proper transmission of history is by oral communication to notice their absence. They might more easily have recognized that a gulf separated them from that pre-Islamic history, but allusions to this matter are rare. Even where there were records of a sort, Muslims were at first anxious to forget them : they belonged to a past, on which they had turned their backs. As will be seen, the exploits which the monuments recorded were exploits of pagan deities, now become what the Israelites would call abominations. But Islam had also occasioned a vast migration, and what the migrants brought with them was the new religion, little or nothing connected with the old.

To the first of these causes for the vagueness of pre-Islamic history as it appears in the Arabic collections attention will be called later. The second cause, migration and immigration, must have powerfully contributed to this result. Medinah, as we learn from the jurist Shafi'i and others, counted as the home of learning : yet that learning scarcely went back beyond the Prophet's arrival, for that event caused a radical change in the population of the place. Many of the older inhabitants removed : the city became crowded with immigrants who had adopted Islam. The early conquests of the Caliphs were immediately followed, or rather accompanied by tribal migrations : the tribes maintained their isolation to some extent and for fairly long periods in their new homes. Cases wherein the migrants had records and carried those records with them must have been exceptional, if they existed at all. In South Arabia there were historical

inscriptions wherein kings recorded their wars and enactments, and at times the resolutions of their assemblies. The only question is whether besides records on copper and stone which could only be read in the place where they were set up, they also had literature, *i.e.*, copies of the same text multiplied on some less cumbrous material, such as papyrus, parchment, or palm-leaf. One modern traveller hints at the existence of such texts, but his notice is vague and has not been verified. A German student of the S.A. inscriptions regards it as a matter of certainty that such literature must have existed, and indeed the Aghani mentions Ḥimyari texts on some portable material: however this matter must be left for the present undecided. What the discovery and decipherment of the inscriptions shows is that in these regions the practice of recording events existed from time immemorial.

Of Arabic authors two only seem to have interested themselves in these monuments: Hamdani, the author of a description of the Arabian peninsula, and a treatise on the towers and fortresses there: a work of which only a small portion has as yet come to light: and Nashwān the Ḥimyari, the author of a dictionary which occasionally throws light on the language of these texts. Some inscriptions which were studied by Hamdani are still in existence. Quotations are occasionally made from poems supposed to be in the South Arabian language by grammarians, who have preserved certain grammatical forms of which some are attested by the inscriptions, whereas others are certainly correct, though hitherto no inscription has any example of them. The

first copies of such texts were brought to Europe by English officers and travellers, Wellsted and Cruttenden. The first person who interpreted them with any degree of correctness was a German, Osiander, whose work was posthumously published. He naturally committed many errors, due to identifications of Sabaean with classical Arabic usage. Thus he renders certain formulae by "because the God heard his request," whereas the true sense is "Commanded by his oracle." Great collections of inscriptions or copies of them were made by the French savant Halévy and the Austrian traveller Glaser. Four dialects speedily revealed themselves, being the language of the four South Arabian kingdoms whose existence had been noticed by the Greek investigators: the dialects however could be sorted into two groups, called the S group and the H group according to the employment of these letters respectively for certain prefixes and suffixes. The progress of the study can be traced in the slowly appearing fasciculi of the French Corpus Inscriptiorum, where the Ḥimyari section has passed through three editors' hands, and of which the continuation is eagerly expected.

Of the four chief Kingdoms to which these texts belong—for the number of Kingdoms is actually considerably larger—one still retains its name as a province or region of Arabia—Ḥaḍramaut, already mentioned in the Old Testament. Saba is often mentioned there also, though its location seems to be quite different from that which the texts assume. The Minaens, or Ma'in are less known, but have left traces in the Biblical record. The Qataban are

known to the Greeks, but otherwise external history is silent about them. Yet the texts which this kingdom has furnished are far richer in archaeological information than the others. When the difficulties of grammar and vocabulary are solved, if ever that takes place, we shall know more about the institutions of the Qatabanian republic than about any other of these states, though perhaps less about their prowess in war.

We may call many of the inscriptions historical records, though normally the form which they take is to give the reason why some votive offering was presented to a god. Such inscriptions commence with the name or names of the donors and an account or list of the services whereby the deity had earned such a gift. These are frequently personal services: winning them the favour of their patrons is a very common cause for gratitude. Success in mercantile ventures, recovery of health, the securing of crops and water-supply, are often recorded in such monuments.

Texts of this sort, and many of those which were at first discovered and brought to Europe, belong to this category, and cannot of course be termed historical: though the light which they throw on social and even political conditions is often considerable, and the proper names which they preserve are in many ways instructive: there are, however, texts, sometimes quite lengthy, which deal with matters affecting the kings and the whole community, and these deserve the appellation historical. Not many of these have been actually brought away from their original sites: we depend for our know-

ledge of them on copies and squeezes. In a few cases we are fortunate enough to have a whole group of inscriptions dealing with either the same events or a series of them : from the latter it is possible to put together tables of dynasties and in some cases to ascertain the events which marked the rise, the extension, or the lapse of dynasties. As might be expected from the policy of these states, they deal exclusively with internal affairs; they record internecine struggles between the Arabian communities, and only after the Abyssinian intervention can they be brought into connexion with foreign affairs. They are curiously free from bombast and, it would appear, exaggeration. We may take as an example C. I. H. 1450 : Certain persons whose names have fallen out dedicated a golden statue to their patron Ta'lab Riyam, or Ta'allab Riyam : the word *patron* appears to signify some minor form of deity.

" Because he helped the tribe Ḥāshid in the city of Na'ḍ against the tribes of Ḥimyar. Two hundred troops proceeded and raided as far as the land of Ḥimyar, where they slew a man. Also because a hundred and fifty troops advanced to Mard in the territory of Alban, where they captured two men. Also because fifty advanced into the province Dalg, where they slew a man. Also because they attacked the Habashah in the province.....and slew therein a man. Also because a troop of Bedouin, a hundred and ten warriors, advanced against Barak, and slew therein a man. Also because his lords, the Banun Hamdan presented him with their horses, and by reason of that gift he slew

two panthers, and all who.....in this....." The author then proceeds to some personal blessings which he has received or for which he prays.

Another lengthy inscription of the same type is C. I. H. 334 of which the first lines are also lost, but which records a list of services rendered by the same deity Ta'lab Riyam. Some offering, probably a golden statue, was set up in his honour by Sa'd Aḥras, son of Ghaḍab, who is mentioned later on, because the patron

" protected them in the expeditions which they undertook in aid of their lord Sha'r Autar King of Saba and Raidan, son of Alhan Nabfan, King of Saba, and because he saved their lord Sh'ar Autor and his two hosts, Sabaean and Himyari, when they went to war with Il-'azz King of Ḥaḍramaut, and the Ḥaḍramites, his garrison (?): when he routed Il-'azz and all his garrison in the province Dhat Ghurab.

Now Sa'd son of Ghaḍab was appointed by his lord Sha'h Autar to survey the King's camp and the two hosts : and he set him over two hundred warriors of the tribe Humlan. Now the tribe Radman attacked the camp on the day whereon they advanced : but Sa'd Aḥras son of Ghaḍab advanced against them with all who had come with him from the tribe Humlan, and they drove the tribe Radman from the camp with utter destruction; whereas the camp of their lord Sha'r Autar and his two hosts were safe and sound.

Further in gratitude for that Ta'lab Riyam healed his servant Sa'd Aḥras, son of Ghaḍab, of two wounds which he received when he attacked the

tribe Radman at the camp. And may he continue to protect and save the lord Sha'r Autar in his two cities, Mawat and Sawwār. Further Sa'd, son of Ghaḍab, praised the power and might of Ta'lab Riyam, lord of Tur'ah, because their lord Sha'r Autar with his two hosts returned in safety from all these engagements: and out of gratitude for that Ta'lab granted his servant Sa'd safe return, and goods and captives and booty, which satisfied them. And may Ta'lab " etc.

As will be seen from these texts the main purpose of the inscription is votive, to render thanks to a particular deity: the reason is then recorded, which becomes of historical importance when the service was of a public character, as in those cases where the help given was in war. In the second inscription of the Mount of Marib we come nearer a genuinely historical document since the record does not form part of a thanksgiving to a deity. It belongs to the Christian period, *i.e.*, the Abyssinian occupation, and starts with a Christian invocation.*

" In the power and grace and mercy of the Raḥman and His Christ and the Holy Spirit. This monument was inscribed by Abrahah, representative of the Abyssinian King Ramhis Zubaiman, King of Saba and Dhu Raidan, Hadramaut and Yemenat, and their Bedouin on the mountain and in the Tihamah. And he inscribed this stone when Yazid son of Kabshat had been appointed overseer and acted contrary to his undertaking. He had been appointed *Khalifah* (viceroy) over certain

* See Glaser's *Reise nach Mārib*, 1913, p. 148.

tribes, and besides the Khilāfat was commander of the forces. And with him were a number of tribes and princes (who are enumerated). And when the King sent Garih Dhu Zabnūr on tour by the king's order in the Eastern country, he was slain by this Yazid." After describing some further acts of this Yazid the narrative proceeds: "Then the King heard the news, and the Abyssinians and Ḥimyarites gathered together in their thousands in the month Dhu Qiyazan of the year 657, they descended into the valleys of Saba, and ranged themselves from Sirwah above Nabat as far as 'Abaran, and when they reached Nabaṭ they despatched their bowmen against the tribe...Alwa, which submitted." Shortly after this Yazid returned to his allegiance, when the news spread that the dam had burst. Certain military details follow and then the repair of the dam is described in detail.

This inscription, which is of 136 lines, dated 658-543 A.D., is in an extremely difficult dialect. The cumbrousness of the style may be only apparent, due to our very imperfect acquaintance with its language, or to the fact that elegance had not been attained in this dialect. It represents an advance on the earlier type, where the purpose was not the recording of events, but to explain why an offering had been made to a deity. In the Abrahah inscription it is clearly the author's intention to record important events. It is very noticeable that this mode of recording them was not safe. In a lengthy and important inscription recently published the king, its author, explains how he removed all the inscriptions (asṭur) which a defeated king had inscribed in

his palaces and temples. These must have contained the records of a little known kingdom, Ausan.

It is observable that in the Abrahah inscription the events are dated by month and year, without day of month being specified. This would seem to agree with the ordinary derivation of the word *ta'rikh*, which the etymologists suppose to come from a Syriac word for month *irah*.

Even a glance at these inscriptions shows us why early Muslims could have no interest in such records of their past. For, as we see, what they record directly is not tribal or national history, but the service rendered by a fictitious deity, rewarded by a pagan rite. The very names of the deities could only occasion horror or ridicule: and the offerings of images would evoke the same sentiments. If it be true that between the pagan and the Christian periods Judaism prevailed in South Arabia, the attitude of that religion towards both pagan deities and images of all sorts is not less hostile than that of early Islam: the population would have been taught to repudiate such monuments long before Islam became dominant. The Christian inscriptions of which the historical and linguistic importance can scarcely be overrated by the modern student, would likewise be odious: for it is clear that the Abyssinian domination left no gratitude or agreeable recollections in South Arabia: the exploit of Saif ibn Dhi'l-Yazan in ousting these invaders with Persian aid was regarded with pride and gratitude: the Prophet's grandfather 'Abdal-Muttalib is supposed to have headed a deputation to Yemen to congratulate the

conqueror, and archeologists claim to have preserved the oration which he delivered on that occasion. Modern science which has not to fear any recrudescence of obsolete pagan cults may however attach high value to documents which from the nature of the circumstances were relegated to obscurity when Islam arose.

Owing to the large number of inscriptions which have been found and copied in South Arabia, and belong to different kingdoms and different dynasties, many awaiting publication, while it is likely that others remain to be discovered, it has been possible to piece together the history of this region in a manner which before these discoveries began could not have been anticipated. It is noticeable that the Ḥimaryi alphabet, as it is called, seems to have been in use all over the Arabian peninsula, since recent finds have been made of inscriptions in this script in N. E. Arabia, neighbourhood of Kuwait, and in N. W. Arabia, neighbourhood of Mada'in Ṣaliḥ, where indeed many scripts have been discovered. Yet it is only in South Arabia that historical inscriptions having something of the value of chronicles have been unearthed. It may be that the political organization of this region was more highly developed, and operations generally conducted on a greater scale than in the other provinces of the peninsula, where the texts which have emerged are either gravestones or lists of proper names or votive inscriptions on a modest scale.

If the acts of kings and public assemblies count as history, we might include in the historical inscriptions those which record assignations of various

sorts, such as lands to the gods or privileges to particular classes, or the incidence of taxation or regulation of water-right. It is unfortunate that the language in most cases offers very serious difficulties: we have neither grammar nor dictionary, and it depends on accident whether a word occurs in a sufficient number of different contexts to enable us to ascertain its sense with any sort of precision. Further, though in the case of one of the kingdoms, Ausan, we not only possess some inscriptions, but a series of inscribed statuettes which perpetuate the form of several members of the royal family, the extent of these pre-Islamic states, owing to changes of local names, is very uncertain. The geographer Strabo, to whom we owe an account of the unfortunate expedition of Aelius Gallus, observes the rapidity with which local names change in Arabia and the geographical difficulties which result.

So long as these inscriptions existed, and the language in which they were composed was known, the materials for chronicles existed even if no actual chronicles were composed. And as has been seen, the pre-Islamic Arabs of the South had an *era*, which is of primary importance for recording events. The era was identified by Glaser as synchronizing with 115 B.C., doubtless some important epoch in the history of the Sabaean state. And though many of the inscriptions which have been noticed are without date, continuity could be obtained from the name of the kings, who usually mention their fathers and sometimes their grandfathers, or even earlier ancestors.

Perhaps it may be said that the history which can be enucleated from these texts will in some respects be less weighty, in others more varied, than what is furnished by the Muslim chronicles. The texts which have been taken as illustrations indicate operations on a trivial scale: if the phrase "slew a man" be rightly rendered, the campaigns recorded would be on no greater a scale than the tribal raids of which the Ḥamāsah and similar works preserve records. In the petty wars between the ancient Greek republics the casualty lists used usually to run into hundreds or at least decades. But the Qutabanian inscriptions published and interpreted by Rhodokanakis reveal a complicated political system which is by no means suggestive of primitive tribal organization. In them we read of deliberative and legislative assemblies, to which we find analogies in the constitutions of the Hellenic states. What Rhodokanakis calls "the principle of publicity," the practice of inscribing the acts of these assemblies on stone and placing them where they could be publicly read, implies that we here have to do with a literary community, with political institutions exhibiting a sort of development which could only have been attained through stages of which it may be possible to recover the story.

While these inscriptions offer opportunity for fascinating investigations into various departments of law and politics, they also furnish precious information about the *religions* of the old states and some light on the preparation for Islam which took place in the Southern regions of the peninsula. When archaeology arose in Umayyad and early 'Abbasid

days, endeavours were made to reconstruct the old pagan cults, and a monument of such attempts is to be found in the Book of Idols by Ibn al-Kalbi, who will meet us later. The gods worshipped in South Arabia were not the same as those of the Hijaz, some of whom we can identify in the Nabataean epigraphy of the North. In the epigraphy of the South, deities repeatedly meet us, whose names we are unable to pronounce, and classess of deities, whose relative rank we are unable at present to ascertain. To them, as has been seen, successes in war are ascribed; hence the annals are, as has been noticed, records of offerings or monuments which they had earned by their services. Something can be made out about the organization of the cults; about persons more closely connected than others with the worship; about their oracles, and the mode whereby answers to questions could be procured : at times highly complicated and indicating intricate relations between different shrines. It would seem that here as in Greece the gods were the progenitors of the kings.

What a mass of historical information can be evolved from texts which were not intended to furnish it! The dominance over the whole peninsula of one alphabet, excellently adapted to the language which employed it, is sufficient to furnish inferences of importance. Either the whole peninsula must have come at some time under the domination of one literary community, or some community must have acquired intellectual predominance and so educated the others. What ancient Greece knew of Arabia was obtained either from travellers' tales or

from scientific exploration organized at the time of Alexander the Great, and obtaining information which the inscriptions show to be curiously exact. But the finds of coins and statuettes indicate a closer connexion with classical Greece than was remembered by Greek historians. The influence of Athens shows itself in the coins discovered in Yemen: and it is apparent in the sculpture, which however resembles the pre-classical rather than the classical art. Images of kings, reliefs of animals and birds, are not uncommon, some well executed: images of gods and goddesses have not as yet been found. Remains of temples and palaces, and inscriptions which once belonged to them furnish traces of architectural monuments conceived on a vast scale.

To the Biblical student the language and the proper names of the inscriptions offer the solution to many problems. Words and phrases meet us here which the classical Arabic fails to recognize, but which recur in the old language of Palestine. Names which in the Biblical record have lost their meaning, and at times have been erroneously interpreted, here find a simple explanation. Old names of Arabian deities are found to lurk in Hebrew appellations where their presence was absolutely unsuspected: even the nomenclature of the New Testament furnishes an illustration of this. Kleopas or Halfai is like Mordecai called after a pagan god.

But, as has been seen, there comes a time when the old gods disappear from the inscriptions and for them is substituted the monotheistic name Raḥman, which dominates some early Surahs of the Qur'an,

and in a yet later inscription, near the commencement of Islam, Christian formulae are introduced. The scanty relics which have as yet come to light of monotheistic inscriptions are of the utmost interest especially for their anticipations of Qur'anic terminology, though, as has been seen, the paganism of the earlier texts bears no clear relation to the paganism which the Qur'an controverts. The tradition supposes the monotheism which preceded Christianity in South Arabia to have been Judaism, and Christian records in Greek even preserve debates between Christians and Jews supposed to have been held in these regions. Yet the monotheism of the inscriptions shows little trace of Judaism : we are scarcely justified in identifying the two. Possibly the dominance of some monotheistic system in South Arabia before the enforcement of Christianity by the Abyssinian invader is what explains the apparent facility with which Islam was adopted in this region.

We have then the right to classify the authors of these ancient texts with Arabic historians, though the languages which they employ are not the Arabic of the Muslims, and we should gather that their authors would have rejected the appellation Arab, which with them appears to signify Bedouin. As has been seen, those which bear a date belong to a comparatively modern era : how far back beyond era 115 B. C. those texts originate is a matter whereon there have been differences of opinion between experts, as there have been on the succession and extent of the empires or states whose existence they reveal, some of which have left obscure traces in

Biblical or classical records or cuneiform inscriptions.

For the Muslim student who desires to be a traveller and explorer I can imagine no more fascinating field of research than South Arabia. Possibly the difficulties which are said to confront the European explorer in that country have been exaggerated : the reports of the travellers are quite inconsistent on this subject. Doubtless the Muslim traveller would be free from many of the embarrassments of which some travellers complain. It is hard to think that the few European travellers who have visited this region can have exhausted its archaeological treasures, which are so copious and so varied, as compared, *e.g.*, with what the Phoenician cities of Syria or the ancient metropolis Carthage have yielded. The obscure state of Qataban alone has left more monuments of its institutions, more acts of its parliaments and enactments of its kings, than the famous Sidon or the yet more famous Carthage. And the record engraved on stone or copper has about it something which brings us into more intimate relation with the past than the narrative transmitted orally through a series of generations or transferred from copy to copy by successive scribes. A poet, contrasting his encomia with the gifts which he has received or hopes to receive says " Poems last through all time, but gifts pass away." In these cases the gifts of gratitude, however mistakenly directed, have not passed away, but lasted through the ages.

LECTURE III.

The Beginnings of Arabic History.

For the vagueness and uncertainty with which *Arabic historians* treat the pre-Islamic period the chief reason is to be found in the maxim "Islam cancels all that was before it." There are anecdotes wherein converts to Islam being asked by Umar to narrate some pre-Islamic experience or city some pre-Islamic verses, reply "God has cancelled all that with Islam: why go back to it?" The notion that a new era having commenced, all that had preceded should be consigned to oblivion, has occurred at other times, *e.g.*, at the French Revolution. At the commencement of Islam it would appear to have prevailed. Hence it comes that the Arabic chronicles know practically nothing of the rather important history which the inscriptions have revealed, and which the Graeco-Roman classics have preserved. The defeat of the expedition of Aelius Gallus organized by Augustus was as great an exploit as the defeat of Napoleon's Russian expedition. In the case of the latter the French authorities attribute their failure to the climate: Russian valour had nothing to do with it. We have however Russian accounts of the matter, and these tell a different tale. In the case of the Roman invasion we have only the Roman account, which asserts that the Arabs showed no fight whatever: the climate and physical

conditions of Arabia ruined the invaders. If we had an Arab account, we might find a different story. We should at any rate have expected that so notable a victory would have been preserved in the memory of the inhabitants of Arabia: but this is not so. Of events which occurred fairly near the Prophet's time the recollection is vague and distorted: since the inscription found by Glaser at Marib, belonging to the time of Abyssinian rule, records a repair of the dam effected at that time, it is clear that the importance attached by Arab writers to the bursting of that dam is seriously overrated. As one author remarks, the decay of a kingdom is likely to cause the bursting of a dam: the latter could not easily cause the former. The legends which account for the presence of Jewish colonists in Yathrib are obviously wild fiction: no one could say for certain whether they were Arabs who had Judaized—which perhaps the Qur'anic phrase implies—or Jews who had adopted the ways of Arabs. The history of Meccah, and the history of Medinah, were the subject of monographs, but it may be inferred that there was nothing known about them till the Prophet's time. The work of Azraqi, though early, is a collection of fables.

Besides the maxim that Islam cancels all that was before it there was another principle which militated against the preservation of records: this was the theory that no book save the Qur'an might be written. A Spanish writer,* Ibn 'Abd al-Barr collects traditions on this subject: the larger number, which

* See Mukhtasar Jāmi'Bayān al'Ilm (Cairo, 1320).

he puts first, forbid it. There was to be no Book but the Book of God: at best a man might put something down as an aid to the memory, but when he had got it by heart, he should burn his notes. The second Caliph was advised to have the *Sunan* of the Prophet committed to writing: he reflected for a whole month with prayer on the subject, and then forbade it. The very able Umayyad, 'Abd al-Malik, found an account of the Prophet's Companions in book form in the hands of one of his sons: the Caliph ordered that it should be burned. The lad was to read the Qur'an and learn the Sunan: no other form of study was to be permitted.

Ibn Abd al-Barr cites some other traditions which contradict these: according to which writing was even commended by the Prophet. The preponderance of opinion is however for the prohibition: and we require such a rule to account for the late date at which prose composition begins. Ibn Abd al-Barr assigns two reasons for the prohibition. One is the retentiveness of the Arab memory, which rendered the committal of literary matter to some material unnecessary, as their memories were sufficiently tenacious to be able to dispense with such aids. The other is the fear of producing a rival to the Qur'an. Of these two reasons we may dismiss the first. There is no reason for crediting the Northern and Central Arabs with better memories than the Southerners, and in Yemen, as has been seen, the composition of historical inscriptions was a practice which had been followed for centuries. The second, fear of competition with the Qur'an, is likely to have been the real and adequate reason.

And this was a principle taken over from the Jews, who, basing their inference on a passage of Ecclesiastes, had forbidden the composition of fresh books, and for a number of centuries had no written literature except the Old Testament.

To these two maxims we must add two other considerations. As the importance of tradition increased, there grew up a profession of ḥuffāẓ, whose business it was to have accurate knowledge of events. That profession could not fail to suffer seriously if it were recognised as possible to obtain from a collection of books the knowledge which others took so much trouble to acquire. Before the notion of written literature became popular it might well seem credible that sheikhs in Nisabur or Isfahan were in possession of historical information which could only be procured from them; once all the learning was accessible in book form, these teachers' wares would decrease in value. It is surprising that the mass of written material which began to accumulate after the rise of the 'Abbasids did not affect the profession of the ḥuffāẓ. The authors of books, however, largely belonged to this profession themselves, and a compromise was effected which was maintained for many centuries. This was the *Ijāzah*, the doctrine that the book had to be communicated to the reader by the author personally or by some authorized person: thus in Tabari's time men went to hear the history and the commentary from him personally, and we know the names of persons who for two generations after his death were the authorized *ruwāt* or reciters of the history. Learning which was got from books without oral

communication was discredited. In an anecdote which will meet us the learned Mada'ini loses in reputation because he misreads a word; whence it was inferred that he knew the narrative by reading not by oral instruction. Men's reputations depended on what their memory retained, not on what they had committed to writing. Tabari himself was found out, so to speak, by a far less famous man, the Qāḍi Ibn al-Buhlul, when the two came to citing poems, the Qāḍi found that the retentiveness of Tabari's memory was vastly inferior to his own. The historian and courtier Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā Sūli had amassed a great library and when asked a question could immediately call for the volume which contained the answer. But this procedure evoked satirical verses; he ought to have been able to give the answers from his memory without consulting books.

Secondly, the distrust of written books which persisted so long may have been due to the frequency of forgery. The historians record numerous cases of it: the letter produced by Mukhtar ibn Abi 'Ubaid as authorization for his proceedings given by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyyah was detected as a forgery by the jurist Sha'bi: according to one account because the seal was too fresh, according to another because this Muḥammad did not call himself by the title contained in this document. According to Miskawaihi even the virtuous and competent Muhallabi was not above resorting to forgery when it suited his purpose. The same historian tells an elaborate story of the forgery of oracles attributed to the prophet Daniel whereby a candidate for the

vizierate won his way to office: and details are given of the process whereby a modern script could be given an appearance of antiquity which would escape detection. The caligrapher Ibn al-Bauwab won his way to eminence by imitating the script of Ibn Muqlah so well that no one could distinguish his work from that of the great Khaṭṭat. The fame won by the Khaṭib Baghdadi for detecting the spuriousness of a deed supposed to have been written by order of the Prophet securing certain rights to the Jews of Khaibar indicates that there were few experts in this sort of criticism. A familiar story which illustrates the generosity of the vizier Ibn al-Furat is to the effect that someone forged a letter of recommendation from him to a provincial governor, who acted in accordance with its request, but communicated his suspicions of its genuineness to the vizier. The vizier declared that these suspicions were groundless, and accepted the authorship of the letter: and afterwards took the forger into his service.

That the historians in the period to which some of the most important belong actually preferred oral communications to written records follows from the extraordinary variety which appears in their reports of the same speeches or letters. One of the most famous of the Arab orations is that pronounced by the notorious Hajjāj on his entry into Kufah. Of this speech we have four nearly contemporary accounts, in the works of Jāhiz, Mubarrad, Ṭabari, and Balādhurī. The first two of these are interested in the language, the two latter in the historical content. All four accounts, while containing

much the same matter, differ seriously in the order of the sentences, in many of the phrases, and each as compared with the others has some additions or omissions. There is a document of extreme importance as the foundation of judicial practice the instructions of the second Caliph to a qāḍi whom he had appointed. We have numerous copies of this brief charge, but there are serious differences between all the copies. If those who reproduced these documents had copied earlier texts they would be inexcusable if they had either by carelessness or arbitrarily made these alterations: the differences are excusable if they trusted to oral communications. Authors who produce copies of letters to the originals of which they might have had access tell us at times that they are quoting from memory.

The theories then which stood in the way of written literature arising were (1) the maxim that Islam cancelled all that was before it, (2) the doctrine that there should be no written book except the Qur'an, (3) that the profession of ḥuffāẓ rendered written books superfluous, (4) that written documents were untrustworthy.

All those theories had in time to be modified. (1) The interpretation of the Qur'an rendered certain historical knowledge indispensable. It frequently, especially during the Medinah period, deals with current events: presently a whole discipline called *Occasions of revelation* dealt with the fixing of the occasions in connexion with which texts were revealed. The texts which deal with current events are very largely allusive, avoiding the mention of proper names: the persons to whom they were re-

vealed would know exactly what was signified. So in the Surah dealing with a false charge brought against A'ishah it is not stated what the charge was, or who circulated it: the matter was one of notoriety at the time, but a later generation, in order to understand the Surah, would require to know details. The interpreters of the Qur'an find in the same Surah verses which deal with events separated by years from each other: it was necessary to have some record of the main periods in the Prophet's career, in order to read the volume with understanding. Thus in Surah III there is matter which is said to belong to the period immediately after Badr, to that immediately after Uḥud, to the affair of the Trench, and to the visit of the deputation from Najran quite late in the Medinah period. The interpreter who tried to explain the force of the texts would be compelled to assume some historical knowledge or to impart it.

But the Qur'an also contains much ancient history and in these cases the employment of proper names is more frequent, but the student would in every case be glad of additional information. He would at any rate like to be able to arrange the events in some sort of chronological relation to his own time. Consultation of the books in the hands of Jews and Christians was, if not actually forbidden, at least discouraged. We shall see that M. b. Isḥaq, the biographer of the Prophet, incurred censure for referring to those works. Yet converts from Judaism and Christianity would at any rate be tempted to utilize what adhered to their memories

in reference to events mentioned in the Qur'an, and this was evidently done. We even know the names of persons who at an early period acted thus.

(2) A reason for retaining an account of the history of Islam in chronological order was the principle whereby *rank was determined by precedence in accepting Islam*. When pensions were assigned out of the public treasury, the principle of classification was length of adherence to the Islamic system. There are frequent references to this *sābiqah* (priority). At the famous arbitration the advocate of Mu'awiyah feared that an objection might be raised to his appointment on the ground that he had no *sābiqah*, not having accepted Islam till the taking of Meccah. It was argued on the other hand that he was a brother-in-law of the Prophet, and this doubtless satisfied public opinion. The lists of those who fought in the Prophet's battles are preserved by Ibn Isḥāq doubtless because of their importance for this purpose. Nevertheless even in Ibn Isḥāq's narrative we find some doubts about the order of events, and in the works of the Jurist Shafi'i, who was a zealous student, and had lived long at Medinah, we find some uncertainty about this matter, grave as was its importance for fixing the chronological order of the Revelation.

(3) The cities and countries conquered enjoyed different rights according to the amount of resistance which they had offered to the conqueror. At times, as in the case of Egypt, rebellion after submission caused alteration in those conditions. It is obvious that without continuous chronicles the maintenance

of such rights would be difficult, if not impossible. It would seem to have been well on in the Umayyad period before copies of such treaties were retained at headquarters, or indeed anything corresponding with a Rolls Office was inaugurated. The occasion is then said to have been a casual one. When treaties are quoted they are apt to be quoted orally, whence, *e.g.*, different chroniclers record the important treaty whereby 'Ali and Mu'awiyah undertook to refer their differences to arbitration, very differently: the witnesses are quite different. Without historical knowledge it would be difficult to estimate the genuineness of treaties or charters when produced.

Examples of this need arising are to be found in Baladhuri's Futūh al-Buldān. Thus when a question arose as to the treatment of the people of Cyprus after a revolt when a great number of jurists were consulted by the governor who had suppressed the revolt, it was clear that those lawyers had to dive into records in order to know how Cyprus was conquered and on what terms, and how such cases had been treated before. The precedents which the lawyers required could only be obtained from books of records or persons who had made it their business to memorize them. The headquarters of this knowledge was Medinah, where shortly after the Prophet's death experts began to form themselves, since the occasions on which such knowledge was required began to multiply speedily. It is a sign that the Qur'an is accurate in describing the people of the region where it was produced as illiterate that not till well into the Umayyad period, the reign of

'Abd al-Malik, was Arabic made the language of the records in the bureaux : the " permanent officials " till then were of necessity natives of the countries which had been conquered, who conducted business in the language and with the formulæ to which they had been accustomed. One can imagine that the employment of Hijazi Arabic as an official language in the bureaux of the empire must of necessity have preceded its employment for the composition of chronicles. The story told above, if true, indicates that 'Abd al-Malik himself had no desire that his innovation should develop in this way : yet we must attribute to it the developments which naturally ensued from it. It gave rise to the profession of the *Kātib*, or Secretary of State, whose range of information presently became encyclopaedic, whereas he also made the most important contribution to the growth of a prose style. Doubtless he had to rely on the researches of grammarians and experts in the Arabic vocabulary but these persons were unable to cope with him in his own line. We have what is probably an authentic story of the fourth century, which illustrates this. The grammarian Abu Sa'id Sirafi, of vast celebrity in his time, as an authority on Arabic usage, is at a party where word comes that an official epistle is required by the Sultan. Abu Sa'id is asked to compose one, and finds the task difficult : a Kātib tosses one off without hesitation. Admirers of the vizier 'Ali b. 'Isā record with pride how he could compose letters to be circulated to the governors of provinces straight off : he had not to make a fair copy, as there was nothing to alter. The *Kātib* becomes at a later period the historian,

not so much because he has intimate knowledge of affairs, as because he is a practised writer.

This was the remote consequence of 'Abd al-Malik's innovation, and there were reasons why the high places in the bureaux in spite of Arabic becoming the official language were frequently filled by persons who were not Muslims, still less Arabs, and the chief prose writers were rarely, if ever, the latter. We have only to think of such names as Tabari, Dinawari, Miskawaihi, Ibrahim the Sabian, 'Imad al-din Ispahani, and the like. The rise of this profession however did not shake the position of the Ḥuffāẓ, those who retained things in their memories, and whose services in producing precedents for legislation were constantly in requisition. For though *sunnah*, meaning properly a custom, came to have the sense of a precedent set by the Prophet, the legal theory that an act which had once been done by a qualified person might be done again, extended itself far beyond the Prophet's acts.

Persons who possessed a store of information which was likely to attract an audience, became kuṣṣās, narrators, who formed circles in the Mosques and told stories. These were most likely to attract if they were about prominent personages in the history of Islam, or prophets mentioned in the Qur'an, and the large amount of matter which accumulated round these names is probably due to their efforts. The early narrators, from whom the later historians derive their information, are often charged with inventing or fabricating, in some interest or other. 'Awānah, ob. 147, who is the source of much, is said to have fabricated to favour the Umayyads: in

the work assigned to Baladhuri the narratives for which 'Awānah is cited seem to support this charge. The Umayyad 'Abd al-Malik is represented in them as generous and forgiving, ready to offer Ibn Zubair any terms, if only he will resign his claim to the Caliphate. For all barbarous and impious acts that took place in connection with the suppression of Ibn Zubair's revolt Ḥajjaj was responsible : when 'Abd al-Malik could restrain his violence, he did so. Where he could make reparation for injuries inflicted by Ḥajjaj, he made it. He was also generous in his estimate of enemies whom he had overcome, and did not approve of their being slighted or maligned. It is difficult to judge of the probabilities in such matters. It is clear however that the reputation for veracity in the case of all these early collectors of information was doubtful. If the later historians relied on their statements, it was because they had no other sources.

(4) The prosperity of early Islam had produced a leisured class, and archaeology is everywhere a favourite pursuit with such persons. As the Islamic cities grew there would be many anxious to know how they were founded and how their chief buildings had arisen : there would also be questions arising from the tribal organization of early Islam, whereby separate quarters were assigned to different tribes in the cities that were founded.

For all these reasons historical science came into existence in spite of official discouragement, and indeed the needs of the legal system made it necessary. The process whereby the rulings of the Prophet came to be the *sunnah* in lieu of pre-Islamic

practice made some record of his doings indispensable, and such procedure involved that something should be known about the persons who enter into the narratives and especially the reporters. Moreover Islam was continuous: the death of the Prophet had not the consequences which often have followed on that of the founder of a system: his place as head of the community was immediately taken by persons in whom for many years he had placed confidence and who were thoroughly familiar with his ideas. For a time the *āthār* meant the acts not only of the Prophet, but those of his immediate successors also. In the Muwaṭṭa of Malik, our first collection of traditions, there is some laxity in this matter.

Certain characteristics which result from the method of composition find their illustration in the volume which is accessible of Baladhuri's history, and are likely to have been exhibited in the earlier collections which he cites. One feature which they share with the Hadīth literature is *repetition*: the same anecdote occurs with slight or no variation more than once on the same page or in different parts of the book; the reason being that the author has obtained it from more than one shaikh. In the Collections of Tradition there is a reason for this; the Prophet's words count as revelation, and it is therefore of great importance to ascertain if possible the correct form in which they were uttered; the different paths are like separate strands all going to strengthen the rope. Further the Traditions form the basis of legislation; they illustrate the mode wherein the Prophet settled cases which came

before him; they furnish important rulings on points of doctrine. Hence it is natural and proper that in such a collection as that of Bukhari the same Tradition should repeatedly occur under different headings or articles of the code. But neither of these reasons applies to the words and deeds say of Umayyad Caliphs, or persons whose authority would not count. The less tedious plan, which some later authors follow, is to cite their authorities at the commencement of the narrative, and, if necessary, admit that though they all agree on the main drift, there are certain minor differences between them.

Besides, we find the consequence of defective memory which affect the literature of anecdote in most countries. Noteworthy sayings are attached to the wrong persons; sometimes owing to identity of name, sometimes to confusion of personalities who had something in common. Mu'awiyah and 'Abd al-Malik were the most eminent of the Umayyad Caliphs, and there was not a little in their characters which was similar; hence the same tale is told of both. Numbers, which are of great importance in historical records suffer seriously from the ease wherewith the memory substitutes one for another. Baladhuri in stating the numbers which gathered round Hajjaj when he was confronted with the rebellion of Ibn Jarud says, some say 6,000, but others 1,600!

The extent to which voluntary and intentional fabrication entered into the traditions which arose during this period is hard to fix, and the individual judgment has little to guide it. A historian of Baghdad, Ibn Abi Tahir, produces the oration of

the Prophet's daughter Fatimah, when protesting against the confiscation of her inheritance by Abu Bakr. Its genuineness was, he said, disputed: but that criticism in his opinion was due to partisanship, the desire to depreciate members of the Prophet's house. It might on the other hand be argued that such a subject offered a good opportunity for the exercise of oratorical power. That tradition was fabricated on a colossal scale is shown by the criticism of it which developed into a regular discipline at an early period, and which reached its maturity in the third century, when the standard collections were put together. The conditions of the collectors varied in severity: what they agreed on was that vast quantities of traditions were fabrications. The anxiety to know more about the Prophet and the heroes of early Islam led, as we know, to greater industry and effort among the Muslims than in any analogous case: and the study of the Tradition of the Prophet is largely responsible for and to be credited with the growth of geography and biography; if the way to test the authenticity of a tradition was to estimate the trustworthiness of the transmitters, it was indispensable to learn as much as possible about their lives: it was necessary to know when and where they had lived, and this rendered geography and history requisite. This was enforced by the principle that the Prophet's sayings and doings were a source of law: and the motives for inaccuracy and fabrication in the case of these and of what might be called secular history seem to balance each other. It may well be believed that Muslims would hesitate more before fabricating

something connected with the Prophet, since according to a well-known tradition such an act involved a high degree of criminality. To fabricate about Yazid b. Mu'awiyah or 'Abd al-Malik would be far less heinous. On the other hand the value attaching to the Prophet's words and deeds was vastly greater, whence there would be a motive for fabrication in this case and not always a discreditable one, which would not be present in the other. Further to distinguish what actually happened from what must have happened requires the attainment of an intellectual poise which even in our time few acquire. Those who put into some shape the accounts of those events in Islamic history which had the most serious consequences, were likely to have been reared in an environment which made them take a particular view of what happened: and the narrative would be adapted to that view. Even in the later history we can see traces of this. We may illustrate by the accounts of the death of Muqtadir furnished by Miskawaihi and 'Arib respectively. According to Miskawaihi Muqtadir was a hopeless coward: though repeatedly summoned to show himself to his troops in the field he makes excuse after excuse, till compulsion is employed: according to 'Arib he comes forward bravely. Both agree that he met his death on this occasion. Probably 'Arib is thinking how a Caliph must have behaved, whereas Miskawaihi follows an accurate tradition.

The process however whereby the narratives became chronicles has now been traced. Eye-witnesses of important events were required to describe them by numerous persons: convenience caused

them to adhere after a time to a fixed form of words, which thus became a ḥadith. We find this process at least as late as the fourth century : a man who has access to valuable information and is prepared to impart it adopts a particular form : the different hearers reproduce it, ordinarily with unimportant, sometimes with important variations. Such ḥadiths became embodied in continuous collections while still retaining their individuality : as the need for abridgment arises they drop the *isnad* and become part of a chronicle. As we have seen, the Arabic historians render the tracing of sources far easier than those of other nations by the fact that their history is a development of Aḥādīth : it does not begin with either the continuous or the official chronicle, but with eye-witnesses' narratives. The possession of this system gave the Muslims an obvious advantage in their controversies with Jews and Christians, who gave more the appearance of taking their information on trust. They had no chains of authorities for either sacred or secular history : where, *e.g.*, the Greek historians are not describing their own experiences, they rarely give us the opportunity of testing the source of the information which they present : we have to assume that it was obtained from people who knew. Ultimately the Jews had to compose an *Isnad* for their *Taurāh*.

LECTURE IV.

Poetry as a Vehicle of History.

If history was in a measure commentary on the Qur'an, there is reason for thinking that it was also to some extent comment upon verses. We meet at times with the theory that poetry was the tribal method of recording history, and the earlier historians cite verses in illustration of the chief events; this they can the more easily do because the military organization is still tribal, and the successes or disasters which they sing belong to the tribe. One of the earliest specimens of this form of historical composition is to be found in the Book of Judges. where the Song of Deborah appears to be the nucleus of history to which the prose narrative is attached as commentary; one of the sources which the historical portions of the Old Testament acknowledge for early narratives is a Book called And he sang,* *i.e.*, a collection of tribal ballads which commemorated victories or defeats. We read similarly of odes wherein the struggles of the Aus and Khazraj prior to the arrival of the Prophet were recorded, which the Prophet, whose purpose was to institute fraternity between the tribes, forbade to be recited. Clearly only such odes as were of transcendent merit or recorded some overwhelming triumph or defeat would stand much chance of being preserved; the French savants who collected the ballads of North

* This is surely the true sense of Yashar.

African communities found that they were all recent; the crises which had produced the earlier effusion had been submerged by later crises, and in consequence new ballads had superseded the earlier compositions. This source of early Islamic history naturally attracted the attention of archaeologists and grammarians, who in consequence are often cited as transmitters. Their interest was not that of the historian, who thinks mainly of what men do, but rather that of the literary critic, who cares chiefly about what they say, or the antiquarian, who is anxious to know their customs and beliefs.

There are some obvious difficulties which attend this mode of perpetuating the memory of events. It is of course possible that heroic fighters like the anti-Caliph 'Abdallah ibn al-Zīubair went into battle reciting verses of their own composition, and that persons who by his side were themselves looking death in the face remembered these lines and, having somehow come safely out of the rout, preserved them and transmitted them. On the other hand it is possible to think and put into verse what such a champion would be likely to say on such an occasion, and with the view of enlivening the narrative put it into his mouth. The practice of inventing speeches for the persons whose deeds are described is too familiar to require illustration. In collections of models for epistles we find letters which might have been written on important occasions, such as the recovery of Jerusalem from the Franks, often difficult to distinguish from letters which actually were written. In the case of the Sīrah of Ibn Isḥāq it is acknowledged that the odes, some of them of

considerable length, with which the narrative is enlivened, and which are supposed to have been produced immediately after or in immediate connexion with the chief events of the Prophet's life, were written to Ibn Isḥāq's order; some suspicion is therefore justified in other cases. But even where authenticity is established, as in the case of the odes composed by the 'Abbasid poets in honour of their patrons' achievements, the nature of the ode renders it unsuitable for conveying such detailed or accurate information. It perpetuates some proper names of places and perosns, but naturally has nothing to do with dates or strategy or tactics.

That a narrative gains in vividness if the characters are introduced speaking and not merely doing deeds is well known, and was observed long ago; but this process, if not strictly limited, turns history into romance. A historian who carries the procedure very far is Dinawari. In narrating the events which led to the battle of Siffin he reports a conversation held by Mu'awiyah with the person who brought him the news of 'Uthman's murder, who urges Mu'awiyah to claim the Caliphate for himself, and recites some verses; Mu'awiyah, impressed by the suggestion, also breaks out into verse, indeed into a fairly lengthy ode. Then he receives the letter of 'Ali, summoning him to offer allegiance, and this letter is produced at length. Mu'awiyah consults his relatives, and his brother 'Utbah advises him to seek the help of 'Amr b. al-'As; Mu'awiyah writes a letter to 'Amr and this letter, summoning the latter, is then inserted. 'Amr arrives, and the author is able to reproduce the

conversation between the two; Mu'awiyah mentions three troubles which have befallen him, of which the demand of 'Ali is the third. 'Amr dismisses the first two as easily settled, but points out the difficulty of resisting 'Ali, and asks what is to be his recompense if he supports Mu'awiyah. The latter tells him to name his own terms; he wants Egypt. Mu'awiyah requires time for consideration, and we now hear a conversation between him and 'Utbah, who advises that 'Amr's terms be accepted. Mu'awiyah asks his brother to stay the night, and presently hears 'Utbah reciting some verses, urging him to venture, and these cause Mu'awiyah to make up his mind. 'Amr now suggests the first steps to be taken, and presently a message is delivered to 'Ali in verse, and 'Ali orders a poetical reply to be made.

Such dramatization of history suggests some scepticism in any case, especially when the author (as is the case with Dinawari) fails to state who his informants were. Secret conversations, if they are to be preserved at all, must be reported by one of the parties; and where the conversation is not creditable to either party, there is no great probability of it being reported at all. Further we find that the letters which according to this historian passed between the parties are quite different from those which another historian, who is called Ibn Qutaibah, produces; to some extent the sense is the same, as indeed might be expected, for this is supplied by the circumstances. It is of course conceivable that both Mu'awiyah and his brother, and the rest, composed odes on these occasions, but the probability is that

they were otherwise occupied. It is evident that what we have in these conversations, to which other historians add others, is the solution of problems which occur. What put it into Mu'awiyah's head to resist 'Ali, and to send for 'Amr? How came 'Amr to respond to the call? These and similar questions arise when the historian desires to penetrate into the motives of the acts which he records. The method employed is to assume the omniscience which the author of fiction of necessity assumes; for him there are no secrets. And the introduction of verses is an artifice for adorning the narrative which Arabic writers of fiction regularly employ. In the Maqamahs the speakers drop into verse when they can find occasion for it.

We have seen something of the weakness which attends ballad poetry as a record of events. Even such ballads as Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome, if we had anything to correspond with them dealing with the events of pre-Islamic Arabia or of the first century of Islam, would not be free from these weaknesses, though they possess the continuity of history and some of the geographical and other detail which constitute an intelligible record of events. But it is not easy to find in the early poetry of the Arabs anything which could be compared with them, or even with the Song of Deborah. It is well known that the versification of the Arabs does not favour continuity: the verse is an independent unit, and normally is by no means inextricably connected with what either precedes or follows: its connexion lies not in its sense but in its conformity to rhyming letters and metre. Hence the verses which deal

with tribal or other history are in normal cases allusive rather than historical or narrative, and, where we possess the entire qaṣīdah to which they belong, are mixed with other matter which is unconnected with their subject. In this way we get a little history in the Mu'allaqat, especially in that of Zuhair, where some men are commended for settling a dispute between two tribes peacefully at their own cost. But to call Zuhair's Mu'allaqah a ballad would be to misrepresent it seriously. Its content is far more didactic than narrative.

The historical verses which constitute the *divān* of the Arabs are not different from this type. The Hamāsah of Abu Tammām furnishes illustrations. They are at any rate in many cases fragments selected from odes, because they deal with particular subjects. Usually they are autobiographical, and need a historical commentary to explain them. The verses had to survive by their own merit, and the authorized reciters would furnish the explanatory details. Grave doubt often existed concerning the occasion wherein the verses had been uttered, and the authorship of even celebrated lines was disputed. Moreover there were cases wherein the incident was what remained in men's memories or somehow came within their knowledge and then verses were composed to suit it. Sometimes we are inclined to smile at what appears to be the uncritical attitude of the historians and archaeologists in citing verses which cannot have been uttered by the persons who are credited with them.

In the Diwāns of the great 'Abbasid poets we get something more nearly approaching the ballad

than these casual allusions. The purpose of many a lengthy ode by Abu Tammām, Buḥturi, Mutanabbi, Sharīf Raḍī, Ta'āwīdhi, and others is to commemorate some historic event or scene. Where the *diwān* is arranged in chronological order, and the heading furnishes date of the occurrence, the contribution to the chronicles which arises is not slight. At times they record events of considerable importance about which the chronicles are silent; Buḥturi has an account of a sea-fight which seems to have escaped the contemporary historians. He describes even with detail palaces built by the Caliphs of his time, about which the chroniclers say nothing.

The idea of substituting for a ballad something more nearly resembling a versified chronicle is found in the third century of Islam. 'Abdallah, son of the Caliph al-Mu'tazz, devoted an ode which he calls *Kitāb Sīrat al Imām* "the Book of the Career of the Sovereign" to an account of the life and reign of Mu'taḍid. He even gets the date of his death into a verse, of which the translation is "He died after two hundred which had passed away in the year of nine and eighty past," *i.e.*, 289. The author was a famous man of letters, whose literary miscellanies are frequently quoted, and whose poetical diwān has considerable merit. He himself after the death of the Caliph Muktafi, when the appointment seemed to be in the hands of the vizier, was put on the throne in lieu of the infant Muqtadir, by a faction which included the virtuous 'Ali b. 'Isā, who held that an experienced man of affairs rather than an infant, should be put by conscientious men on the throne. The soldiers, however, who

were faithful to the memory of Mu'taḍid, thought otherwise, and 'Abdallah's Caliphate was ephemeral.

The ode which is of 363 couplets is unlike the ballads a continuous account of Mu'taḍid's exploits. It begins after the Basmalah with the loyal statement that the Prophet when he passed away "left to the sons of 'Abbas the inheritance of a kingdom securely founded, in defiance of every envious person who seeks it, and would destroy it under pretence of building it up." The title then follows: "This is the book of the Conduct of the Sovereign, well wrought of gems of speech, meaning Abu'l-Abbās the best of mankind for sovereignty, as may be said with knowledge of the truth." He arose, the poet goes on to say, "to sustain the cause of the kingdom when it was lost, was free to any one to plunder, had lost all respect, trembled if a fly buzzed, when every day a sovereign was being killed, or in terror of his life, or abdicating in order to avoid captivity." This passage is a correct description of the period of anarchy which arose with the murder of Mutawakkil and continued till the accession of Mu'tamid, and though "every day" is a gross exaggeration, we find it employed by a speaker in Tabari's chronicle. He then describes the licence of the soldiery, "every day demanding rations, which they regard as a right and a debt due to them." He then asserts that the robe of sovereignty had been torn by parties whose religion was no better than paganism; among them the second Pharaoh of Egypt, rebel against God, obedient to Satan; *i.e.*, Ibn Tūlun, and the 'Alawid the leader of the miscreants, who sold free

men in the markets. He then enumerates other persons who, he says oppressed the people, Isḥaq the Baitar, the most expert of mankind in drink and music, 'Isā Ibn Shaykh and his son, both of them brigands, who prayed for the sovereign every Friday, but otherwise took no notice of him, took men's money openly, and dyed their weapons with their blood. This continued to be the people's condition until they were helped by Abu'l-'Abbas who was like the Persian Ardashir, who did his best to renew a ruined realm. His chief trouble was with that Zanji rebel who obtained possession of Basrah for many years and defeated the imperial armies time after time. The poet attributes the merit of his final defeat to Mu'taḍid, who undoubtedly assisted his father Muwaffaq in this troublesome business. The rebel's name was Ḥasan (fair): Ṭabari usually speaks of him as the *Khabīth* (ugly); his revolt was clearly in part religious in character as the leader claimed to be a descendant of 'Ali, and in his manifesto as reported by Ṭabari claims that they are not fighting for any worldly interest. His description by Ibn al-Mu'tazz confirms the language of Ṭabari. He sold free men as slaves in the markets: he was associated with criminals and rebels: he slew old men and infants: he despoiled souls and goods: he destroyed palaces and mosques, he was the head and leader of every heresy: the spokesman of every unbelieving rafiḍī, cursing the companions of the prophet, all but a handful; every one but himself he regarded as a Kafir. For a time he cajoled the blacks, undertook to enter Baghdad, asserted that he understood mysteries. He ravaged Ahwaz and

Abullah, established himself in Wasit, reduced Basrah to cinders never likely to rise again; practised unheard of cruelties; the poet enumerates the Baghdad generals whom this pretender defeated: Musa (Ibn Bogha), whom he spued from his mouth, Muflih, whom he put to death, and who left the Turks after his loss like the owner of a hand which had been amputated from the wrist. He also slew Manṣūr b. Ja'far who had previously been a great man, and rumours of his victory had been spread. Then he drowned Nuṣair, retainer of Sa'id the one-eyed. Ultimately after all these successes God raised against him a hero, who ceased not for a year and a second and a third striving with his counsel, his sword, his goods, his speech and his acts. The poet then indicates that Mu'taḍid's ultimate success was won by means other than mere bravery in the field: "He would harbour the deserter, and forgive slips and trespasses, nor would you find him violate any contract, nor mix falsehood with his earnest. After this he went to Syria, where the people learned of his gallantry." Ask concerning Qail whom they overthrew in Shar'yar. From Syria he proceeded to Egypt; and went to fight the Saffar, flying except that he was in a saddle.

The poet next proceeds to more domestic successes—his overthrow of the vizier Isma'il ibn Bulbul Abu l'Suqr, a person of great importance, though Ṭabari mentions him casually only. His contemporary poet Ibn al-Rumi both eulogizes and satirizes him, especially his claim to be descended from the Arab tribe Shaiban. According to the poet this vizier was an expert in extortions: "he

would take from this wretch his estate, whereas in another case he would want both his goods and his wife. As to anyone whose father died wealthy, such a person would be long confined in prison, and the vizier would say, 'Who knows that you are his son?' When merchants were known to be wealthy the vizier would declare that the Caliph had deposited money with them: if he denied the claim, he would be smoked or burned. Out of his extortions he built a palace, which was plundered before his death, and rased to the ground. He was also a musician and performed in public: he was an admirer of Plato and the philosophers, talked of lucky and unlucky stars, sensibilia and intelligibilia, measured the longitude of the earth and the spheres, and the dimensions of the territories of the Chinese and the Turks. Men in consequence were disgusted with those who performed the Islamic ritual. And all this went on till he was struck by the arrow of death —and I should like to know whether his knowledge had told him this?''

He implies that the death of Isma'il was followed by the accession of Mu'taḍid, to whom Egypt sent tribute, the Saffar swore allegience. Mu'taḍid then proceeded to scrutinize the lists of the retainers and eject all incompetent soldiers: after this measure he proceeded to Mausil, and extirpated brigandage and piracy. There were, he says, on the Tigris, a thousand '' milkers,'' people who exacted tribute from all ships that went up or down the river. The robber chiefs who were compelled to submit are named, among the most interesting being Hamdan, whose fortress was rased: the descendants of this

Hamdan play a great role in the history of the following century. Then one Harun, a khariji evidently, as he cursed 'Uthman and repudiated 'Ali, was Caliph of Kurds and Bedouins.

The poet then enumerates among the services of Mu'taḍid his postponing the nairuz, *i.e.*, accommodating the Kharaj year to the solar calendar : as might have been expected, and appears from other sources, the exaction of the land-tax by the lunar calendar led to great hardships, as the tax-gatherers employed torture of various sorts to compel payment : and this could only be effected by borrowing at exorbitant rates. All this, however, the poet assures us, came to an end.

Next he proceeds to admiration of this Caliph's buildings, which he asserts, were superior to those of any previous Caliph. In one of these was an artificial tree : no one has ever seen the like of the tree with branches, bearing leaves and fruits. planted in no soil, not irrigated by water, but telling of a wise man, successful, experienced, knowing, thinking before he speaks; such works (and many more are enumerated) are evidence of the might of Islam.

The greatest of his conquests, he presently asserts, is Amid, the patron of every defiant rebel; no city so well fortified was ever seen : according to the poet it was taken by Mu'taḍid after a lengthy siege. This was the seat of that Isa ibn Shaikh, who was mentioned before. From Amid he came to Raqqah, where he stayed a month, and owing to the alarm which he spread, tribute was sent from Egypt. On his return he was welcomed by three

" the Emir, the Vizier and the third Abu'l-Husain al-Qasim, who were like the three supports of a tripod." The Caliph is complimented on his skill in choosing such helpers

He proceeds to state that after ten years of Mu'taḍid's reign he saw the Prophet in a dream, who thanked him for his services, after which came the capture of the rebel Saffarid Isma'il who was brought in chains to Baghdad : and the defeat of the rebel Ibn Zaid in Tabaristan.

Various other successes are then mentioned, some rather cryptically : then there is a notice of the Qarmaṭians, the people of the thickets, who established mischievous laws, and were destroyed as completely as the people of 'Ad—this is an exaggeration, for the Qarmaṭians gave serious trouble in the succeeding reigns. What Ibn al-Mu'tazz tells us about them is of interest : " They say, if we are slain fighting bravely for our religion, we shall come back, after certain days to our folk;—they fight on behalf of a hidden chief, who promises but does not perform."

There follows an attack on the people of Kufah, who are supposed to have encouraged Husain to revolt and then deserted him : the tears which they shed over Husain are compared to crocodile's tears—this must be an early example of the proverb. There is also a reference to the variety of systems in this place of which we have some other notices. They (the people of Kufah) remain bewildered in their religion : they are neither Jews nor Christians : the Muslims are quit of them. They are Rāfiḍis of different types. Some repudiate the

Apostle, and assert that Gabriel made a mistake in his conduct, *i.e.*, gave messages which were intended for 'Ali to Muḥammad. Some say 'Ali is our lord: that is all the religion we require. Of these are the rebels and the revolutionaries, who answer any call to fresh allegiance.....their prophet is Ibn Abi'l-Qaus, who reduced the number of necessary prayers, making one substitute for another.

If this poem be compared with the chronicle of Ṭabari, it will be found to be nearly as instructive: in one or two cases Ibn al-Mu'tazz dates events by the month, but it is not clear to which year he refers. He did wisely to choose the rejez metre for the purpose of this chronicle: the grave difficulty of maintaining the same rhyme for some hundreds of lines is thus avoided. Though some of the lines are from their nature prosaic, many of the phrases bear out the description of the language which is given at the beginning of the work. Hence it comes very nearer history than the ballads. It shares with them the partisanship which has been noticed: for not everything attributed to Mu'tadid could with justice be ascribed to him, and even the notion that some case could be made out for his enemies does not occur to the poet. If however we had no chronicle for the period, we should find Ibn al-Mu'tazz a fair substitute for one.

Another specimen of a historical poem is that by the Hamdanid Abu Firās, a cousin of the celebrated Saif al-daulah, who was taken prisoner in one of the latter's wars with the Byzantines, and vainly implored his cousin to see that he was ransomed. The poem in which he recounts a long

series of events belongs to the old style called Mufākharah, wherein a bard glorifies either himself or his tribe. After a rather lengthy erotic prologue the poet devotes over 150 verses to a chronicle of the Hamdanids : the metre is Ṭawīl and the rhyming letter R.

This portion of the ode commences with compliments to Saif al-daulah, who, he says, by his exploits has rendered it unnecessary to recall the earlier glories of the family. Nevertheless he gives its earlier history, starting with an unnamed ancestor who, he says, collected the Taghlib tribe when it was in danger of dispersion, and paid the blood-money for a hundred who had been slain in some tribal quarrel. Another member of the family had entertained the sovereign and his army. Another ancestor had governed the province Diyār and sustained the population in a three years' famine. He also "cured the disease of the frontier, which had seemed incurable, and transferred the sickness to the heart of the King of Rum." He built a fortress to protect the frontier, which apparently had since been rased, but which, the poet foretells, will be rebuilt. When famine befell the two Diyār (*i.e.*, Bakr and Muḍar) he removed its effects by his generosity. His uncle was the man who overcame Fātik and Qattāl. He also marched to the palace of the Caliph and burned it while the army was surrounding it. The account of these matters furnished by Miskawaihi's chronicle is very different. Ḥusain ibn Ḥamdān, the uncle to whom the poet refers, at the commencement of Muqtadir's reign, attacked the Caliph's palace, but met with such

resistance that he withdrew and fled to Mausil. The poet attributes to this person another series of exploits which are either concealed by the historian or presented in a very different way: the various victories which the poet claims for his uncle are claimed by the historian for the great general of the time, Mu'nis. This is the case with the conquest of Egypt, the defeat of the rebel Subkara, and the capture of Yūsuf ibn Abi'l-Saj, which are recounted by the historians at considerable length, without much allusion to the part played therein by the Ḥamdanid. There follows in the poem a series of pre-Islamic glories not easy to identify. From these the poet proceeds to the capture of Baghdad by Saif al-daul and Nāsir al-daulah, which he represents with a certain amount of justice as their proving the helpers of the Caliph when he had no helper, bringing him home and placing him on his throne, and conducting the affairs of the Moslems in a manner which won the gratitude of religion and Islam. The murder of Ibn Ra'iq by Naṣir al-daulah, which in the history appears as an act of gross treachery is recorded in the line "when the calf of Iraq, Ibn Ra'iq tyrannized, one who was neither a tyrant nor extortionate found a remedy for him." It is rather remarkable that in enumerating the glories of his family the poet omits that which most impresses the reader of Miskawaihi's chronicle—Abu'l-Haija's fidelity to Qāhir. The final part of the poem is devoted to an enumeration of the exploits of Saif al-daulah, in part the same as those celebrated by Mutanabbi. Among details he mentions that when the Ikhshid saw what over-

shadowed him, *i.e.*, the power of Saif al-daulah in Haleb—he determined to conciliate him, and held that by a matrimonial alliance he would gain more than he could get with an army.

This ode of Abu Firas is undoubtedly a more poetical performance than that of Ibn al-Mu'tazz, but it exhibits the defects of the ballad style in a high degree. The style is largely allusive : he does not give the names of his ancestors and uncles, whence the ode is not intelligible without commentary. The exploits celebrated are, so far as we can identify them from other sources, seriously exaggerated, or even wholly misrepresented. The career of Saif al-daulah was certainly no uninterrupted series of victories, but only such receive any notice or are the subject of allusion. Moreover it is clear that the poet thinks very little about chronological order, and it would be impossible to extract anything like a consistent account of one of Saif al-daulah's campaigns from the verses. Various allusions are clearly of interest and must refer to historical events, but they are enigmatical : commentaries, should we find them, would probably deal only with linguistic matters as indeed the Beyrut commentator misspells Ibn Ra'iq as Ibn Za'iq and tells us that Ikshshid is "the name of a man."

If however it is of only moderate value as history, it is of some interest as an example of the *Mufākharah* style, which though late, is at least of undoubted genuineness and by a poet of considerable talent and of high reputation. Moreover, as a cousin of Saif al-daulah and Nāṣir al-daulah, both of whom played parts of great consequence in the

politics of the time, he was a more competent encomiast of the two than the ordinary court poet, who would know his patron less familiarly and be more careful about his utterances. It appears however that of the events of the generation which immediately preceded his own knowledge is rather vague: it is by no means clear that he could name the uncles and ancestors whose exploits he would commemorate. As has been seen, his account of even recent events is not only one-sided, but, if the chronicle can be trusted, seriously misrepresents what occurred. Hence the danger which accompanies the employment of ballad poetry as history is illustrated by this ode of Abu Firas.

The third example of a versified chronicle which we have is in the anthology of the Spanish writer Ibn Abd Rabbihi. This is an account of the exploits of the Caliph 'Abd al-Rahman III, the first of the Spanish Umayyads who took the title. It is like Ibn al-Mu'tazz's ode, in Rejez metre, but unlike that is divided into sections which bear dates: it is therefore modelled on the chronicles. The language is naturally eulogistic throughout and exaggerated, but he gives lists of the places in Spain which 'Abd al-Rahman reduced, several of which *e.g.*, Albirah, retain their names to this day: in some cases fairly accurate details are furnished. In 301 he is said to have attacked Carmond, where one Ibn Sawadah had rebelled: he asked for some months' respite after which he would be the slave of the conqueror. The latter granted this request, and went home. The verses for the next year run: "Year 302: in this there was the return from the

raid of 301, and there was no further raid nor mission in this year." The remaining paragraphs are summaries of what occurred, which, though not exactly poetical, are fairly clear and detailed. Thus year 304 runs:

"After this was the raid of the year four, and what did not our Lord perform therein, through the devout king stretching out both his hands in the path of God! For he led two captains, who secured victory, one to the frontier and its neighbourhood against the enemy of Polytheism and its adherents, another to the tall mountains of Murcia, whereas the former went to Valencia. The general whom he sent to the coast was al-Qurashi, commander of forces: whereas Ibn 'Ali 'Abdah went against the polytheists, in the fullest and best equipment. The two proceeded with continuous victory and bereaved the enemy. After this glorious raid he sent his client Badr to raid Lablat al-Hamra, towards the end of this year, no other: he besieged the place and compelled it to surrender its governor whom Badr brought captive to his master."

Under year 305 he records a victory over a Muslim rebel, but also a defeat sustained by one of the Caliph's generals, Abu'l-Abbas, who, he says was the bravest of the brave, but led an army of no fighting men, who, when he was surrounded by the enemy, surrendered him to them.

The Urjuzah goes on from year to year ending with 322. The verses are exceedingly monotonous, as they repeat the same phrase, in describing a series of raids, sieges, capitulations, massacres, rasing of fortresses, rebellions, imposition of terms

and the like. A large number of local names are mentioned, which however are to a considerable extent mutilated in the Egyptian editions, but doubtless could be corrected by any one who collated the prose chronicles with this ode, or verified the names in geographical works. Very few names of enemies occur; these are chiefly designated by abusive epithets.

From what claims to be no more than a catalogue of raids one ought not to expect continuous or intelligible history, and the Urjuzah is in consequence little more than a *memoria technica*, and scarcely a good one. In order to turn it into history the author would have had to devote more study to the situations, so as to tell us something of the internal condition of the cities conquered, the reasons which led to the repeated rebellions, and the preparations in each case which led either to success or failure. The best of the Greek historians do something like this, but few of the Arabic chronicles go to this length: the better sort do, however, deal at some length and detail with the internal condition of the country whose history they are recording, so as to render their narrative more intelligible and instructive. It is not easy for the panegyrist to do anything of this kind, for anything like accurate biography of sovereign, general, or statesman, while it involves an account of the difficulties which they have to face, can in few cases credit them with invariable success in dealing with such difficulties: ordinarily such a statement reveals weaknesses and failures, possibly even crimes, as well as ability and success, with strict adherence to virtue. The

panegyrist, who is afraid of wounding his patron's susceptibility, has to confine himself to what flatters.

Of these three specimens of poetical history every reader will probably regard Ibn al-Mu'tazz's ode as the most instructive and intellectual, while that of Abu Firas has the best claims to be called a poem, and indeed contains some verses of high merit. The Urjuzah of Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi displays no commendable quality except facility in the production of rejez rhymes and perhaps some acquaintance with Spanish geography. A ridiculous error is committed where the author makes the Christians swear by the idols mentioned in the Qur'an. His anthology has acquired some popularity owing to the encyclopaedic nature of its contents: the Sāḥib Ibn 'Abbad found it disappointing, as he expected a Spanish author's work would have contained more original matter. He quoted over it some words which occur in the Surah of Yūsuf: "This is our merchandise returned to us."

These three poems present the highest stage which the historical epic reached in Arabic verse: and, as has been seen, it is likely that any reader of the three would assign the chief merit to Ibn al-Mu'tazz. Other works which bear the title "historical poem" are much further removed from the chronicle than these. Such is the historical poem of Ibn Badrun, a Spanish writer, which is a series of miscellaneous historical allusions, meant to be explained by a commentary. Such too are the two odes which claim to give the history of the Ḥimyarites, but are evidently late and unhistorical:

the enucleation of this history had to be left to later epigraphists.

Those who study the history of the Islamic dynasties will however find the poetical diwāns helpful, not so much for their recording series of events, which they rarely do, but because they reproduce many a political situation, and to a small extent serve the purpose which a popular press serves. The diwāns naturally vary much according to the career of the authors in the possibility of utilizing them for this purpose: the most instructive are diwāns such as those of Buhturi in the third century and Ta'awīdhī in the sixth, whose authors were definitely court-poets under different sovereigns and who faithfully reproduce the sentiments evoked by contemporary events. They said what the Caliphs or ministers wanted them to say: we can gather from their odes what was occupying public attention and how the public wished it to be regarded. Buḥturi's odes make us feel how the Żanji danger was affecting the population of Iraq. Ta'āwīdhi's reproduce the sensation caused by the Crusades. Where the poet is not permanently attached to a court, as was the case with Mutanabbi, who tried his fortune at a great number, the information conveyed is less valuable: the poet is not in such a case sufficiently identified with a community to depict its concerns with accuracy.

We have thus answered a question which is sometimes asked and answered negatively:—is there anything corresponding to the Epic in Arabic verse? If by the Epic is understood the historical poem, of which Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered, or the great

Indian Epics may be taken as examples, we have seen that the language shows certain efforts in this direction : and the *rejez* metre, as the style suitable for didactic poetry, was naturally chosen by the authors. Whereas Ibn al-Mu'tazz designed a work of art, Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi scarcely contemplated more than a *memoria technica* or summary of events easier to remember than a prose narrative. That the language produced nothing more considerable in this line than the odes which have been analysed is due in the *first* place to the circumstance that the qaṣīdah with its bold leaping from subject to subject was ill-adapted to a poem with a plot : in the *second* place to the fact that only the *rejez* metre was suited to such a composition, and only in the form in which the rhyme is confined to a single couplet. The older form wherein the same rhyme pervades the odes, and the other metres, were far too difficult to permit of lengthy narratives being committed to them. Hence such attempts as we have considered remained exceptional though encomiasts and satirists naturally continued to allude to important events wherein their subjects had some share : and to these allusions the historians frequently refer less for confirmation of their narratives than owing to the felicity of the versification.

LECTURE V.

Historians of the Second Century.

The Foundation of Baghdad marks the commencement of the literary period of Arabic in the sense that books begin to be composed for reading as well as for reciting and committing to memory, though, as has been seen, the belief that only oral transmission was trustworthy was difficult to shake. It is not indeed quite easy to distinguish the author of matter intended for oral transmission from the writer: the isolated tradition could exist either in writing or be orally transmitted, and the works which precede the continuous chronicles seem to be of this form. Such an author is Abu Mikhnaf, Lūt b. Yaḥya, who died about 157, to whom some 32 works are ascribed. Many of his narratives are embodied by Tabari in his work. Different narrators of this early period are supposed to have specialized in portions of their subject: Abu Mikhnaf knew more than others about the affairs of Iraq, Mada'ini most about Khurasan, India and Persia, Waqidi about the Hijāz, while all these were of equal authority on the conquest of Syria. Abu Mikhnaf's titles are all of the episodic type: they were monographs on battles, the deaths of eminent men, or events which were of importance in the early history. One fastidious authority remarked

on him that he came from Kufah, and his tales were worthless.

Among other transmitters of knowledge who came before the popularity of written books we may mention 'Awānah b. al-Hakam, a man of humble origin, his father a slave tailor and his mother a negress, but who was a source of information to the learned of the next generation; his death-date being variously given as 147 and 158. He was of special authority on "conquests," but was also quoted for poetry. It was asserted that he was a partisan of 'Uthman and fabricated traditions which favoured the Umayyads: another tradition however makes him a supporter of the 'Alawids, who lamented the failure of that M. b. 'Abdallah who contested Manṣūr's claim to the Caliphate, but was defeated and killed. Yaqut records that Mada'ini, who will presently be mentioned, got most of his information from 'Awanah: and the famous grammarian and archaeologist Asma'i was also among his hearers. The anecdotes which Yaqut produces throw little light upon his activity whether as a teacher or collector of information: one that is more interesting than the others makes him, when asked his tribe, assert that it is the tribe which preserves the memory of knowledge when other people forget it. The questioner inferred that he must be of Kalb, which was the tribe of the celebrated Ibn al-Kalbi, who is presently to meet us. The instances on which this generalization was based were scarcely numerous.

Before however the narratives began to assume a stereotyped form suitable for commission to writ-

ing the functions of the transmitters were scarcely distinguished. We find the same persons cited as authorities for historical events and for legal decisions. The fact that law depends on tradition and tradition depends on history rendered the functions of the three even in far later times apt to overlap.

This prose literature actually starts with the Sirah of the Prophet by Muḥammad b. Ishāq, whose grandfather Yasār was taken prisoner at 'Ain Tamar, and formed one of the first band of captives brought to Medinah. His death-date is variously given as 150, 151 or 152 : he was buried near the grave of Abu Hanifah the jurist, in the Khaizuran Cemetery. He was said to be the first compiler who collected the narratives of the Prophet's campaigns. He appears to have got into trouble at Medinah by going for information to Fatimah daughter of al-Mundhir b. al-Zubair, whose husband Hisham b. 'Urwah disapproved. He fled to Hirah, where al-Manṣūr was, and dedicated his Maghāzī to this Caliph : and obtained an audience for his work there, in the Jazirah, and in Rai, where many transmitters of his narrative remained. The views taken of his veracity were very different : the chief traditionalist of the third century fails to cite him. Other authorities are reported as saying that learning will last so long as Ibn Isḥāq lives. Malik Ibn Anas however applied the term dajjāl " false Messiah " to him, perhaps because he undertook to criticise Malik's traditions. Other complaints made against him were that he favoured the tenets of the Shi'ah, and obtained information from the grandson of Hasan : that he employed versifiers to compose

poems to insert in his Sirah, as though they had been composed on the occasion, *e.g.*, a poem in which Abu Ṭālib defends his conduct to his fellow-citizens, ballads belonging to both sides in the campaigns, etc. Further that he made serious mistakes in the genealogies which he introduced: and that he obtained information from Jews and Christians, whom he calls in his book "people of the former learning." Besides his Sirah he composed a history of the Caliphs (doubtless the Umayyads) and a book of origins.

As is well known, the great Sirah of Ibn Isḥāq has not been recovered: its contents are known to us from the extracts given by Ibn Hisham and the historian Tabari, which to some extent supplement one another.

The other authors of this period are rather collectors of separate traditions, which had doubtless assumed some stereotyped form, but the extent to which the script was intended as more than an aid to the memory is doubtful. One of the most voluminous of these historians was Mada'ini, 'Ali b. Muḥammad b. 'Abdullah, born 135 and died 225. He was originally of Basrah, then went to live in Mada'in, which gave his *nisbah*, and thence removed to Baghdad, where he remained till his death. He enjoyed the favour of Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mausili, who is familiarly known to us from the Aghani as a professional musician, but an expert in every other subject. A story is told of some distinguished men seated at the door of Mus'ab Zubairi one evening when a man came by in fine attire on a handsome ass. One of the party knew him to be

Mada'ini and asked him whither he was going: he replied "to that munificent person who fills my pocket from top to bottom with dinars," meaning Isḥāq al-Mausili: Yahya b. Mu'in, a high authority on tradition, declared him to be a trustworthy narrator. A story which follows is less favourable. Mada'ini recited a tradition about Khalid's invasion of Syria, which contained a verse about Khalid's guide Rāfi. Mada'ini mispronounced a word in the line giving the letters wrong points: "I knew thence," said the narrator, "that his learning came from written leaves"—not, as it should have, from oral instruction. A story which Mada'ini himself tells is how the Caliph Ma'mun ordered Mada'ini to come to his court, and recite traditions to him: he repeated a number, and presently told the story of 'Ali being cursed from the pulpits by the Umayyads. Apropos of this he records how during the Umayyad domination he never in Syria heard any one called 'Ali or Hasan or Husain: only the names of Umayyad Caliphs like Yazid and Walid were given to the children. A traveller at this time passing by a house asked the owner for water, and called a son Hasan by name to fetch some. The traveller asked how he came to call his son by that name. The reply was that parents constantly abused their children, and he did not like to abuse any one who was called after an Umayyad Caliph: with the name Hasan that did not matter. The story was meant to shock this Caliph: probably it did, as he contemplated having a member of the 'Alid family to succeed him. The narrator however supposed the Caliph to think such abuse suitable.

The list of Mada'ini's writings which follows is like a series of chapters or sections rather than of continuous works. It is divided into groups, of which the first is Records of the Prophet, some specimens of this first group "The Book of the Mothers of the Prophet," *i.e.*, his ancestresses. The Description of the Prophet. Narratives of the Hypocrites. The Prophet's treaties. Names of the Hypocrites, and other persons about whom Qur'anic texts were revealed.—The next group are Records of Quraish, commencing Genealogy of Quraish and its records. The Book about al-Abbas son of Abd al-Muttalib. Records of Abu Talib and his children.

Next group: Marriages of the Nobles and Record of Women: these seem to have collections of curious information, *e.g.*, Book of those who married two sisters, or a wife's daughter, or had more than four wives, or married a Parsee woman. Book of women whose husbands died in their defence. Book of women satirized by their husbands, etc.

Next group: Records of the Caliphs. These were all what we should term monographs, clearly short compositions dealing with some minute inquiry. "Book of Caliphs' wives who married again." "Names of the Caliphs, their patronymics and the length of their lives." "Ornaments of the Caliphs." At the end of this list there figures a Great Book of records of the Caliphs, dealing with the time from Abu Bakr to Mu'tasim. Doubtless portions of this are what we find embodied in the

words of later historians, where Mada'ini is cited as the authority.

The next group is *Events*, *i.e.*, monographs dealing with the chief events in the history of Islam : " Book of the Apostasy," *i.e.*, the rebellion which followed the Prophet's death. " Book of the Camel," *i.e.*, the battle wherein 'Ali defeated A'ishah and her party. ' The Book of Nahrawan." " The book of the Khawārij." " Addresses of 'Ali and his despatches to his Governors." " Records of Hajjāj and his death." Yaqut adds to this long list a great work called the Book of the 'Abbāsid dynasty, not mentioned in the Fihrist, but of which Yaqut had seen a part in the handwriting of Sukkari the archaeologist.

The next group is that of *Conquests* : Conquests of Syria from the days of Abu Bakr to those of 'Uthman. Conquests of Iraq from the days of Abu Bakr—usually this conquest is dated somewhat later—to the end of the days of Omar. Conquests of Khorasan and records of its rulers, *e.g.*, Qutaibah and Nasr b. Sayyār. Two of these monographs dealt with India : the Book of the Indian frontier, and of the Indian provinces. The long list of these treatises seems to have covered the whole region of Islamic conquest with the exception of North Africa and Spain, which are not mentioned. Probably much of the same matter was embodied in the work of Baladhuri of the next century. At a period not earlier thar the Crusades a series of works purely fictitious in character and dealing with some of these conquests were fathered on Waqidi.

The next group is Records of the Arabs, which also contain collections of curious matter illustrative of Arab ways: "The Book of men called after their Mother:" "Of men called by a mother's name:" "The book of horses and racing:" "The Book of the building of the Ka'bah."

The next group deals with poetical history: many of the items have titles which suggest that the author was interested in curious details: "Book of persons who quoted verses during an illness:" "Book of verses answered in Prose:" "Book of persons who stood upon a grave and quoted poetry:" "Book of persons who when told of a man's death quoted some verse or prose:" "Book of women who aped men:" "Book of those who preferred the Bedouin women to the women of the towns," etc.

In addition to this lengthy series of monographs Yaqut quotes an additional list of *Kutub mu'allafah*, apparently works which contained more original matter than the former, which probably were traditions strung together: some of them which come near history are the Book of the Qadis of Medinah; of the Qadis of Basrah; of the striking of Dirhems and the exchange; "Book of Medinah," "Book of Meccah." Others were more of a moralizing character, but one in this list is a geographical treatise containing an enumeration of the districts and the principle of their taxation.

Mada'ini's literary activity was clearly portentous, even if the monographs were of moderate size. Apparently his taste was in favour of curious learning and interesting details, but he presents a

transition from the single narrative to the continuous work, if the statement that he composed works of the latter type is to be trusted.

Numerous relics of Mada ini's researches are to be found in the later histories, and in the 'Iqd Farīd of the Spanish collector Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi. His collection of the speeches of 'Ali is probably intact in this work, and he is probably the authority for the collection of the correspondence of 'Ali, Mu'āwiyah, and others, which is preserved in the same, and excerpted elsewhere. It is asserted that he got much of his material from 'Awanah. As will be seen later, the value to be attached to these documents is very doubtful. At a later period, the end of the fourth century, a distinguished descendant of 'Ali, the Sharif al-Radı, made a collection of his great ancestor's remains called Nahj al-Batāghah, but apparently this person placed little confidence in Mada'ini's collection. We have to consider both in the case of the correspondence and in that of the orations whether there would be any likelihood of any person having access to the letters which reached both parties, or of the speeches being either written down or memorized at a time when they were intended to affect people's conduct, and not to interest them as historical monuments or models of style. The likelihood of letters being preserved becomes greater when the "bureau of the seal" came into existence, and there is a probability that the correspondence between Manṣūr and the 'Azid pretender Muḥammad b. 'Abdallah is historical, though the copies produced by Tabari and Mubarrad differ in some important details. But before the introduc-

tion of this bureau the chances of such correspondence being preserved are likely to have been small.

An author who resembles Mada'ini both in his subjects and in his mode of treatment is Hishām b. Mohammed b. al-Sayyib al-Kalbi, an authority of the first order on genealogies: one of his works on this subject is said to be in existence. His death-date is given as 204 or 206: the list of his works exceeded 150. One of them, the *Kitāb al-Ashām* has been printed and is of small compass, as is likely to have been the case with the remainder. Several of the titles are identical with those of treatises which figure in Mada'ini's list. Several dealt with pre-Islamic history, such as the Book of the Kings of Kindah, the Book of the Tubba's, Kings of Yemen, Book of the Kings of the Parties —titles which do not inspire much confidence, since it is not probable that Ibn al-Kalbi had access to that epigraphic material from which alone this history can be enucleated, and which the geographer Hamdani is the only Arab who both acquired and utilized for such research. Numerous monographs dealt with various departments of pre-Islamic archaeology, such as the Book of the Religion of the Arabs, the Book of the Judges of the Arabs, the Book of the Kāhins, the Book of the Jinn. Some however have lists which suggest actual history, "History of the affairs of the Caliphs," followed by a work on the Description or Characteristics of the Caliphs, the Book of the Children of the Caliphs. Others dealt with events in the Prophet's time, others were geographical or

statistical in character. His patron is said to have been a member of the Barmecide family.

The historian of this century who acquired the greatest renown is doubtless M. b. Omar al-Waqidi, whose life extended from 130 to 207. Waqidi counts as a more serious personage than either Mada'ini or Kalbi, and indeed is said to have been a pupil of Malik b. Anas and Sufyan al-Thauri, both of them jurists of the highest order: further he is said to have come in contact with that Ibn Juraij who is associated with the commencement of the study of tradition. Like Tabari who will occupy us in the next lecture Waqidi was an authority on tradition and jurisprudence as well as on history. He was appointed by Harun al-Rashid qaḍi of the Eastern quarter of Baghdad, by Ma'mun qaḍi of Mahdi's Camp. Yaqut reports an anecdote illustrating Waqidi's relations with Ma'mun. The judge wrote to the Caliph complaining of some difficulty which had compelled him to run into debt: mentioning the amount. Ma'mun replied in his own writing: You have, I see, two qualities, munificence and modesty: the former has caused you to deal lavishly with your possessions, the latter has induced you to mention to us only part of the debt which you have incurred. We have ordered that there shall be given twice the amount which you asked. and if we have fallen short of your actual requirements, that is your own fault: if however we have fulfilled your request, then practise even greater liberality than before. For the treasuries of God are open, and His hand is stretched out in munificence. You yourself reported to me when

you were al-Rashid's judge that the Prophet said to Zubair: "The keys of wealth are in front of the Throne, and God Almighty sends down to mankind their provision according to their expenditure. Whoso spends much will receive much, and whoso spends little receives little." Waqidi stated that he had forgotten this Tradition, and was more astonished by Ma'mun's reminding him of it than by his gift.

There follows a story which Waqidi is supposed to have told. I had, he said, two friends, one of them of the family of Hashim: we were like one person. I was in great stress for want of means and the Feast was approaching. My wife said to me: We, you and I, can put up with this distress, but our children rend my heart with pity for them. They see the children of the neighbours in fine clothes for the feast, while they themselves are in these rags. Do try and obtain some money which we could spend on dressing them. So I wrote to my Hashimite friend, asking him for such assistance as he could give: he sent me a sealed purse, which, he stated, contained a thousand dirhems. I had no sooner felt some comfort when the other friend wrote to me making a similar complaint to my own: and I sent him the purse unopened. I then went out to the Mosque where I remained all night, being afraid to meet my wife: but when I got home, I told her what I had done, and she approved my action, uttering no reproof. While we were talking, in comes the Hashimite friend, with the purse, unopened as before: he asked me to tell him truly

what I had done with what he had sent. He said: When you wrote to me, my sole possession in the world was what I sent you, so I wrote to our common friend to ask him for assistance, and he returned me my own purse, with its seal unbroken. So we three divided the contents in equal amounts between us. Ma'mun heard of this affair and sent us 7,000 dinars, 2,000 for each of us three, and 1,000 for my wife.

Yaqut proceeds to give an account of the size of Waqidi's library: when he moved from the Western to the Eastern side of Baghdad, his books formed 120 camel loads: for all that he boasted that whereas other people possessed more books than was stored in their memories, in his case the contents of his memory were the more copious. The statement implies that the literary output of the 60 years was phenomenal: for that the objection to written books lasted even beyond the middle of the second century seems too well attested to admit of doubt.

The list of Waqidi's works is lengthy, and varied: several of the works contained in it are of the style which we have seen to be favoured by Mada'ini: monographs on special incidents in the history of Islam: such as this were the Book of the Saqifah and the proclamation of Abu Bakr: the Book of the death of the Prophet: the Book of the Apostasy and the Palace, *i.e.*, the death of 'Uthman: it is not clear why these two events should have been combined: the Book of Siffin, etc. At the head of these historical works stands

"the great history," and "the Book of History and campaigns and missions," *i.e.*, an account of the Prophet's mission and his campaigns. We should gather from the titles that all these books would have had great historical value, if preserved.

European scholars have praised Waqidi for special attention to chronology, and the judgments of Moslem authorities on his work, though by no means unanimous, are in the majority of cases favourable. The only work of his which has seen the light is a part of his Maghazi, published here (Calcutta), and a translation in German of a fuller MS. preserved in the British Museum. The list of his works contains some Conquests, of "Syria" and "Iraq." The books which have been printed as his with those names, are, as has been seen, suppositious, and of no historical value.

Another polygraph of this period, whose name frequently occurs among transmitters of historical matter, is al-Haytham b. 'Adi, whose life covered 130-209. The range of his studies was similar to that of Ibn al-Kalbi, who was supposed to collapse at the sight of al-Haytham: the latter so conspicuously surpassed him. The great traditionalists were not satisfied with his authority. A slave-girl of his was quoted for the assertion that he prayed the whole night and lied the whole day. His inquisitiveness extended to the private affairs of his contemporaries, who paid poets to satirize him. The diwan of Abu Nuwās contains a violent lampoon on him, which he is said to have earned by failing to treat this important personage with due respect when he came to hear a lecture of al-Haytham.

The very long list of his works is a series of titles of monographs dealing with chapters of pre-Islamic tribal history, or events in early Islam, or archaeological matters connected with the Islamic cities and Islamic institutions. We find in it histories of the governors and judges of Kufah and Basrah, and the like. But there is also a "History arranged in order of years," which must be a very early example of this style which afterwards became normal. That his works acquired great fame in his life-time may be inferred from the story that the Caliph Harun al-Rashid, when an action against al-Haytham was brought before him, immediately recognized him as the person meant in Abu Nuwas's satire.

Another person who meets us frequently in the authorities for historical traditions is al-Zubair b. Bakkar. He is said to have been a lineal descendant of that 'Abdallah b. Zubair who for a time maintained himself in the Caliphate. He died as Qāḍi of Meccah in 256. The list of his works is fairly long, and consists chiefly of biographies of poets: some however were on historical events. In the list we find an early example of the practice of calling a book after the patron's name. A historical treatise called the Muwaffaqi was named after the author's patron al-Muwaffaq, the brother of Mu'tamid who managed the affairs of the empire.

Many of the traditions or narratives put together by these persons are preserved intact in later works: what we clearly find in this period is the growth of the practice of accumulating libraries, though those who aspired to be authorities on his-

tory travelled about the empire to hear the celebrated lectures. We are told that Abu 'Aun b. al-'Atā had his house piled up to the ceiling with books: he died in 154, *i.e.*, at a time when prose literature had only commenced. Abu 'Aun before his death, it is added, burned his library, a practice which is recorded of not a few persons. There is a letter preserved of Abu Hayyān Tauḥīdī of about the year 400, wherein he defends his conduct in doing this by citing the example of many eminent men. The main motive, one fancies, was the desire to be regarded as the ultimate authority on a subject: if a writer's written sources were preserved, probably those who followed after would prefer to cite these sources than some work based on them. The wording of the passage in Abu 'Aun's case indicates that this was done as an act of piety; either this archeologist had returned to the view that it was unlawful to write books, or he thought their content frivolous. It is noticeable that in the code of Abu Yūsuf, of Harun al-Rashid's time, property in books is not yet recognized: and indeed the only works of which this jurist seems to know are the Qur'an and collections of poems.

Although the continuous chronicle becomes popular in the third century, whereas cases of it seem sporadic in the second, the monograph retained its popularity well into the third century. A voluminous author of this type was Ibrahim b. M. b. Sa'id b. Hilal, a native of Kufah, who however migrated to Ispahan where he died in the year 283. He claimed to be connected by lineage with several famous persons: one of his

ancestors was paternal uncle of the adventurer Mukhtar Ibn Ali 'Ubaid, and had harboured the grandson of the Prophet, al-Hasan. He belonged at first to the Zaidi sect, but then joined the Imami, of which he was a champion. The list of his writings which occupies a whole page is like a replica of some of the groups in Mada'ini's catalogue: there is "the Book of the Saqifah," "The Book of the Riddah," the "Book of the Murder of Othman," "the Book of Siffin," "the Book of the two arbiters," etc. Doubtless all these were presentations of those epoch-making events from the point of view of the sect which he followed. Like Waqidi he was also a jurist, and composed both Pandects and treatises on separate chapters. Patriotism found vent in a Book on the Excellence of Kufah and of the Companions who took up their abode there. One of his works called "Book of those who have been slain of the family of Muhammad" belongs to a category well represented in the literature of the Shi'ah.

Of the histories which belong to this period it would seem that only two, M. b. Ishaq and Waqidi, have survived in sufficient amount to enable us to pass judgment on them Muhammad b. Ishaq may be described as a charming writer, who understands the art of grouping his material in such a way as to maintain his reader's interest: who can tell us the sort of information about the leading characters which enables us to envisage them: and who, when the narrative calls for comment on the part of the author, can introduce observations which are by no means contemptible, though they may not

always be convincing. It is clear that the excerpter Ibn Hisham had far stricter ideas of propriety than Ibn Isḥaq himself. The excerpter confesses to having expurgated the narrative, and he not unfrequently excuses himself for failing to reproduce the poems in Ibn Isḥaq's text, on the ground that they were unsuitable. Some of the narratives which he has introduced agree word for word with what is found in Waqidi, and differences between the two can at times be explained by the compiler's motives. The statement of Yaqut that M. b. Isḥaq used Waqidi as an authority seems to conflict with chronology, as Waqidi belongs to a later generation. Since Ibn Isḥaq's work commences the series of biographies and chronology, and is at the basis of later lives of the Prophet, which are innumerable, posterity's debt to him is very great. About the same time Malik b. Anas was engaged on his Muwaṭṭa, the first collection of the Prophet's sayings and doings which could be used to supplement the Qur'an: we are told that some of his contemporaries remonstrated with him for his innovation in committing such a work to writing, but the Caliph is said to have regarded it as a public boon. Though Yaqut's biography of Ibn Ishaq is fairly lengthy, he does not record a similar protest in this case: the objections are not to the writing of a Sirah, but to the supposed immortality of the author.

To the question whether any of these writers or the traditionalists on whom they depended actually falsified history in the interest of some person or sect it is not easy to give an answer. As has

been seen, in reporting events narrators quite normally put the supposed thoughts of the agents into their own words : interviews which must from their nature have been and remained secret are put into dialogue form and the next chronicler assumes that what he has before him is not imagination but a record of fact. Conjectures based largely on etymologies are repeated not as conjectural explanations, but as transmitted records. Probably if we should discover copies of the literary efforts of Mada'ini, al-Haytham b. 'Adi and Ibn al-Kalbi, we should find much in them which the laws of historical probability would compel us to reject. Nevertheless the service rendered by them in putting into shape series of narratives dealing with the important episodes of the Islamic empire was very great. Their work in preparing for the continuous chronicle of Tabari was quite similar to that of the jurists of Medinah in preparing the way for the codes of the law-schools. And since events can only be recorded by eye-witnesses or persons who have taken part in them, the collecting of this material from so many sources involved vast research, and often distant travel. For since the events were not confined to a moderate area such as the Hijaz but were spread over a large portion of two or even three continents, it was no easy task to reach any source of information. The studies of Prophetic tradition, history and geography helped each other to develop, for since information on the first two of these subjects was to be acquired by travel, the Book of Roads and Regions, though in the first instance intended as a help to the government, became an aid to the traditionalist and the historian also.

LECTURE VI.

Historians of the Third Century.

The third century of Islam is one of the most fertile periods of Arabic literature. To whichever field we turn our attention we find standard works composed: works which afterwards were the subject of commentaries, were imitated, abridged, or otherwise treated as classics. To Muhammad Ibn Jarir Abū Ja'far al-Tabari we owe two of the most important works: his exhaustive commentary on the Qur'an, embodying all that tradition had preserved concerning the contents of the sacred volume, and his Chronicle of Apostles and Kings, or universal history, brought down to 298. Yaqut's life of him is one of the longest in his collection, occupying forty pages. It begins by distinguishing the four departments wherein Tabari acquired eminence —Tradition, Law, Reading of the Qur'an, History. He died on Saturday fourth from the end of Shawwal 310, and was buried on the Sunday morning in a house in Rahbat Ya'qub in Baghdad. Although he used no pigment to conceal grey hair, both his beard and the hair of his head remained black to his 85th year: for he was born in 225. Some however say that he was buried at night, for fear of the populace, since he was suspected of favouring the Shi'ah sect —which was the case with many historians of distinction. Al-Khaṭib, the author of the vast history

of Baghdad, denied this : he asserted that on the contrary his funeral was attended by an innumerable body of mourners, prayers were said at his tomb for a number of months, both night and day, and dirges were composed over him by many persons of piety and learning. Of his studies something will presently be said : among his disciples Ahmad Ibn Kamil is mentioned, the person with whom Mis-Kawaihi pursued his historical study. For forty years running he wrote out forty pages a day. Yaqut's authority proceeds to narrate how Tabari asked his friends whether they would be interested in a commentary on the Qur'an. They asked in reply how long it would be. 30,000 leaves was the reply. As they said life was not long enough for such a work, he reduced it to one-tenth, about 3,000 leaves. He then asked the same question about a history of the world from Adam to his own time. When they were again told this would occupy 30,000 leaves, and they shrank from the proposal, he expressed disappointment at the lack of interest and energy, and again reduced his work to a tenth of its proposed bulk. We get an idea of the length of time taken by the physical effort of copying such a work as either of these from the story of some one who claimed to have taken the whole commentary down from Tabari's dictation : it had taken eight years, from 283 to 290. The history, he then tells us, was completed on Wednesday last but two of Rabi' II, 303, having been continued to the end of 302.

The next authority cited enumerates a variety of other works by Tabari, one of them a treatise in

18 volumes, of a huge script, dealing with the readings of the Qur'an; Tabari made out a system of his own, which however he communicated to a very few persons, and only three were ever known to have followed it.

There follows a story which savours of the miraculous. Tabari, Ibn Khuzaimah, M. b. Nasr al-Marwazi and M. b. Hārūn al-Ru'yani were all in Egypt, *i.e.*, Fustat, and found themselves in a state of extreme indigence: they decided to draw lots, to determine which of the four should go out and beg. The lot fell on Ibn Khuzaimah, who asked for time to wash and say a prayer. While he was praying, there appeared lights and a eunuch despatched by the Governor of Egypt, who had sent four purses, each containing 50 dinars to be given to each of the four by name. The Governor had seen a vision wherein he was told that the Muhammads were hungry, and so sent them this relief, with a promise of more when these sums were exhausted.

There follow some stories told by Ibn Kamil, who as we see was Tabari's pupil. He went to see the historian accompanied by his young son, nine years of age: there was a copy of Ibn Rabban's Firdaus al-Hikmah, a medical work, under the praying carpet: the visitor wished to examine the volume, but Tabari preferred that he should not do so, and bade the slave-girl take it away. Tabari asked why Ibn Kamil had not sent his young son to study with him, and when Ibn Kamil suggested that he was too young, replied that he himself by the age of seven had learned the Qur'an by heart, had led prayer at the age of eight,

had taken down Tradition at the age of nine: Tabari's father had seen Tabari in a dream standing in front of the Prophet, having with him a wallet filled with stones, which he was throwing. The dream interpreter said this meant that Tabari when he reached maturity would be a champion of the Prophet's code. This led Tabari's father to encourage him in the pursuit of learning.

He began his studies in Amul of Tabaristan where he was born: thence he proceeded to Rayy. Here one of his teachers was Muhammad b. Humaid Razi. "He would come out to us several times in the night to ask us what we had taken down, which he would proceed to read"—to ensure accuracy. We used to go to hear Aḥmad b. Humaid Dūlābi, who lived in a village some little distance from Rayy, and then run back like mad in order not to miss M. b. Humaid's lecture: this person communicated to him more than 100,000 traditions, among them those contained in M. b. Isḥaq's work, which he embodied in his history. From Rayy Tabari proceeded to Baghdad, where he intended to hear Aḥmad b. Harbal, who however died before Tabari had arrived. Tabari however stayed some time in the metropolis, hearing the lectures, and thence proceeded to Basrah, having stopped for a time at Wasit also with the object of hearing courses. From Basrah he went to Kufah, where one of the Shaykh's, Abu Kuraib, Muḥammad b. al-Alā Hamadhani, was peppery. When the students desired admittance, Abu Kuraib put his head out of a window and asked: Which of you knows by heart what he has taken down at my dictation? The

students all looked at Tabari, and said to him, Doubtless you do. Tabari replied that he did, and was able to satisfy the rigid examination of the Shaykh from whom he obtained another 100,000 Traditions. From Kufah he returned to Baghdad, where he took to the disciplines of Law and the studies connected with the Qur'an: thence he travelled westward, till having attended courses at Syrian cities he proceeded to Fustat, in the year 253. In Fustat the most hospitable savant was 'Ali b. Sarraj, who found Tabari an expert not only in the religious sciences, but in poetry as well. He was able to recite the Diwān of Ṭirrimāḥ for which this person had been searching, and dictate it to him with interpretation of the *gharīb*. In Fustat he figured as the founder of a Law-school, having previously followed that of Shafi'i: he had some followers, as indeed was the case with other jurists, since it was not till the end of the fourth century that the four schools were recognized as orthodox to the exclusion of others.

Ibn Kamil records an anecdote which he had heard from Tabari, dealing with his experiences on reaching Fustat, and indicating the differences of dialect between the Arabic-speaking countries. Some friends whom he made procured him a dwelling, and told him a series of things which he would require: the terms which they employed were all unfamiliar to him in their Egyptian senses. Thus he was told he required two donkeys: he said that his father had provided him with a sum of money to be expended in study: if he were to buy two donkeys with it, how could he pay for his instruction? The

donkeys however meant trestles of wood, to keep his bed raised above the ground, in order to escape vermin, and the other articles were equally cheap and indispensable.

A story told of his conduct in Fustat indicates some want of candour. He was beset by persons of all sorts, examining him in the different branches of knowledge wherein he had acquired reputation. One day one of these persons asked him a question about prosody ('arūḍ). Tabari had not previously devoted any attention to that subject, but was unwilling to plead ignorance. He got the questioner to put off his question for a day, and in the meantime borrowed the treatise of Khalīl b. Aḥmad, the classical authority on the subject. By the time when the questioner repeated his visit, Tabari had become a "Metrician."

A story casually told in the life of another person indicates that Tabari did not always come up to his reputation as a man whose memory retained vast stores. This person is the qāḍi Abu Ja'far Tanukhi known as Ibn al-Buhlul, who died in 318, and was one of the judges consulted about the heresy of Hallaj. He met Tabari on the occasion of a funeral in Baghdad, without knowing who he was: they entered into conversation and both displayed great acquaintance with literature. When the qāḍi learned the name of his interlocutor, who was famed—not as a writer, it appears, but for the power of his memory and the versatility of his learning—the qāḍi regretted that the conversation had not taken another turn: some time later they met on

another occasion, and the qāḍi took the opportunity of testing Tabari's powers. Whenever a poem was quoted, the historian was requested to recite it in full: he omitted many verses and halted frequently: but each time Ibn al-Bublul was able to supply the gaps. The audience became convinced of Tabari's deficiency, and Ibn al-Buhlul was gratified by the result.

From Fustat he returned to Baghdad, thence home to Tabaristan, which he visited again in 290. On his return to Baghdad after the former of these visits he got into trouble with the Hanbalites, owing to a remark of his about their founder which sounded disrespectful. Inkstands were flung at him, and his house presently pelted with stones, which rose in a great heap, and were presently removed by the police, of whom Nazuk, known from Miskawaihi, was already head. He composed an apology wherein he eulogized Aḥmad b. Hanbal, and concealed the work wherein he disputed this person's opinions, which was not published till after Tabari's death. As has been seen, it is not clear that he succeeded in conciliating the Hanbalites, who were a turbulent element in the city.

His skill in grammar was sufficient to earn the praise of Tha'lab whose courses he had attended before the latter acquired celebrity: and Tha'lab was known to be chary in his praise of others.

Among the characteristics of Tabari it is recorded that he was unwilling to favour one disciple more than another: if a student were unable to attend one day, Tabari would defer the course till he could come.

Besides travelling to so many countries to acquire knowledge orally he appears to have purchased texts also. A bookseller narrates how Tabari, proposing to compose a treatise on Analogy, requested him to collect as many treatises on the subject as he could procure. The bookseller got together more than thirty works on the subject. Presently Tabari returned them with many red marks.

Yaqut devotes a certain amount of space to Tabari's religious opinions, which were strict, though in some respects not easy to reconcile with the later orthodoxy. He treated Khawārij and Rawāfiḍ as infidels, *i.e.*, persons whose evidence could not be accepted. He maintained that there was no inheritance between members of different sects of the same religious system, whether Moslems, Jews or Christians. On his deathbed he granted forgiveness to all his enemies, except any who had charged him with "innovation"—which he thought an unpardonable offence. He maintained with some vehemence the tradition whereon the Shi'ah base 'Ali's appointment to the succession, but he also was a fervent admirer of the first three Caliphs. He had to quit Tabaristan after his last visit, because the practice of maligning the three Caliphs was rife in the province, and Tabari was afraid of personal injury owing to his views. The governor of the province sent to have Tabari arrested, but he was informed in time by a friend and escaped: the friend however was seized and scourged.

He is said to have been too proud to receive any gift which was greater than he could match with a

return gift. Abu'l-Haija b. Hamdan, who played rather a heroic rôle at the time when Muqtadir had been deposed and al-Qahir substituted for him, sent Tabari a present of 3,000 dinars: he declined it on the ground that such a present was quite beyond his power to repay. On another occasion when the vizier sent him a present of money with the request that if he would not accept it himself he would distribute it among needy and deserving persons, Tabari returned it with the observation that the vizier would be more likely than himself to know of such persons. On the other hand he himself sent presents to the vizier when the Pilgrim caravan brought him his income from his estate in Tabaristan.

The works on which the historian set the greatest store were neither the Commentary nor the History, but his legal works, the *Ikhtilaf*, which was his first composition, and of about 3,000 leaves, his *tahdhīb* al-Āthār, an account of the traditions of the Prophet on which reliance could be placed, and a juristic treatise called al-Basīṭ. At the time of his death he was engaged on a great treatise on ethics, similar in plan to the Ṭhyā al-'Utūm afterwards produced by Ghazali.

Ibn Kamil, who, as has been seen, was a pupil of Tabari, describes both his personal appearance, and his habits which were marked by scrupulous cleanliness; he also tells us how Tabari divided his day: from noon till afternoon he was occupied with writing. After the afternoon prayer he would go to the Mosque and give lessons in the Qur'an until the first evening prayer. After this

he would give lessons in jurisprudence. Then he would return to his house. There was also a lighter side to his character, and some anecdotes are preserved illustrative of wit and humour.

A personage with whom he carried on a serious controversy was that Dāwūd b. 'Ali Ispahani, founder of the Zahiri system: a controversy which at times was marked by asperity. It is noticeable that this person's legal system was destined to win wider circulation than Tabari's ever reached.

The judgment of posterity upon his works is probably in favour of his Commentary and his History, both of which appear to be faithful reproductions of material which he had collected in his travels. He was too decidedly a man of letters to possess some of the qualifications of a historian: hence when he has to deal with the affairs of his own time, he is defective, gives no intelligible account of the progress of events, omits important details, whence the all-powerful viziers and Caliphs of his time are shadowy figures. He is very much more serviceable when he has materials which had been worked up by predecessors to reproduce. We may well doubt whether it would have been in his power to compose a history ten times the bulk of that which has been preserved, and probably this story should be dismissed as fabulous.

Since to the Western student the growth of Islam by conquest is the matter of the greatest interest, it is unfortunate that this is not a strong point with Tabari. A historian who has for his subject foreign wars, is compelled to learn something about the other side: the condition of the

community, the names and careers of leading generals and politicians, and the like. It should not have been outside Tabari's scope to make investigations of this kind, whence he might have contributed much to an understanding of the Moslem advance into France and its arrestation by the victory of Charles Martel. Towards the end of the fourth century an author arises who takes trouble of this sort, Abu'l-Rihan al-Beruni, but he is altogether exceptional. Doubtless the Shaykhs from whom Tabari heard and the books to which he had access were more profoundly interested in domestic than in foreign affairs.

The work of the great traditionalists who were Tabari's contemporaries consisted in selecting out of the vast number of traditions which were current such as could be authentic. Their "conditions" differed, but they were agreed that only a moderate number were to be believed and used for legal practice. Probably we are to regard Tabari as performing for history a task similar to what Bukhāri and Muslim did for Tradition: the selection of really historical matter out of the quantity of material presented by the works of Mada'ini and others: followed by the difficult and to some extent dangerous task of bringing the record up to his own time.

Vast as is Tabari's historical work we find that the transmission of it after his death was by Rāwīs as though it were oral tradition. It was communicated to Miskawaihi by Ibn Kamil: one Aḥmad b. Abdallah Farghani, 327-398, whose father had been a friend of Tabari, "transmitted" the history and

the commentary, having learned them from his father. The latter had composed a history of his own, which this son continued.

A contemporary of Tabari who also acquired fame both as a historian and on other grounds was Ahmad b. Dawud Abu Hanīfah al-Dinawari. There was some doubt as to the date of his death, accounts varying between 282 and 290. His best known work was a treatise on botany: he was however famous as a stylist, and a debate is recorded which took place in the salon of the grammarian Abu Sa'id Sirafi as to whether Abu Hanīfah or the great Jahiz of Basrah were the better stylist. Abu Sa'id endeavoured to settle the controversy, making Abu Hanīfah's the more idiomatic Arabic, whereas Jāhiz was the more original in his matter, and the more attractive. Abu Hayyan Tauhidi, who reported this conversation, declared that he placed three writers at the head of all who had ever penned any composition: these were Jahiz of Basrah, Abu Zaid of Balkh, and Abu Hanīfah Dīnawari. Of the last he says: "He combined the wisdom of the philosophers with the eloquence of the Arabs: in every department of knowledge he had a standing; he was a proficient astronomer; his work on botany combined the knowledge of the Bedouin with the eloquence of the true Arab: he had composed a work in thirteen volumes on the Qur'an." He attracted the notice of Muwaffaq, the brother of Mu'tamid, who became his patron. He was also a great philologer: a story is told of Mubarrad coming to Dinawar, where his host 'Isā b. Māhan

asked him the meaning of a difficult word in the Tradition. Mubarrad being unprepared for the question, improvised a meaning for the word, and when asked for a proof passage, invented a rejez couplet for the purpose: then Abu Hanīfah was announced and the question was put before him. He asserted that Mubarrad's quotation was a forgery, and that the word had quite a different sense from that which Mubarrad had assigned it. Mubarrad was compelled to admit that Abu Hanīfah was right, and excused himself on the ground that, having so great a reputation as a philologer, he was ashamed to plead ignorance of the first question which was propounded to him.

The list of his works which Yaqut quotes from the Fihrist is very miscellaneous: geography, botany, mathematics, philology, and literary history are all represented, as well as actual history. One volume purporting to be his Book of Lengthy Narratives has been published, and it contains a sketch of universal history brought down to Mu'taṣim. It is unlike Tabari in the omission of the *Ishāds*: the narrative is continuous, with fairly frequent introduction of verses.

Where the author cites authorities they are Kalbi and Haitham b. 'Adi. As has been seen, he tells history in the style of a romancer, wherein private conversations are reported at length and the parties are made to bandy verses with each other: even at the critical period when Naṣr b. Sayyār is endeavouring to warn Marwan II of the danger that is threatening from Khorasan, the messages are in verse. He exhibits little critical power: he re-

counts (as we have seen) how one Kirmani sent to 'Umar b. Ibrahim, a descendant of Abrahah b. Sabbaḥ the last of the Himyari Kings, soliciting a copy of the treaty made between Yemen and Rabi'ah in the days of Paganism: this request was complied with and a copy of the treaty sent which the author inserts at length. It is in classical Arabic and rhymed prose and begins with a monotheistic invocation. We have in the Marib inscription a composition of this Abrahah, and it is in the Sabaean language: Dinawari has however no suspicions.

Where this author differs from Tabari, it is probable that Tabari's account should ordinarily be preferred. It is noticeable that in narrating the rise of the Abbasids he makes no allusion to the supposed bequest of Muḥammad b. al-Hanafiyyah, which for other reasons we have seen to be a fiction. There can however be no real comparison between his work and Tabari's: a universal history which occupies just 400 pages is obviously on a wholly different scale from the gigantic work of the other. The suggestion that this is not the book of lengthy narratives which appears in Dinawari's list seems to have much in its favour: as the title does not correspond with the contents.

Another contemporary is Aḥmad b. Abi Ṭāhir, who died in 280 and of whose great work on the history of Baghdad, its Caliphs, Ameers and their days one volume, dealing with the days of Ma'mun, has seen the light. Tabari has been charged with plagiarizing from this author, but it is difficult to prove this.

This person's father's name was Taifur, and he was of Marwarudh. His authority is given as 'Umar b. Shabbah, a famous narrator. He began as an elementary school teacher. The author whom Yaqut follows asserts that he knew of no one who had acquired fame as an author and poet who made more mistakes in language, metric and statements: he was also notorious for plagiarizing portions of other people's verses. An amusing story is told of an expedient whereby he and a friend of his obtained assistance at a time when they were both in great indigence. Ibn Abi Ṭāhir shammed death and his friend went to a great man to solicit help in burying him. The great man came to see the corpse and scratched the nose: Ibn Abi Ṭāhir sneezed, and his friend explained that this was the remains of his spirit leaving the body. He would seem to have made his living ordinarily by composing encomia: a case is recorded wherein he was assigned 100 dinars for an encomium on the vizier Al-Hasan b. Makhlad, of whom Tanukhi tells some strange stories. The vizier's treasurer whose name was "Hope" declined to pay, asserting that he had no order to that effect. Ibn Abi Ṭāhir wrote some verses bidding the vizier to be generous while he could, as the time might come when he could not: and he doubled the gift. The list of his works which follows is of great length, mostly biographies of poets and selections from their works: there were also certain political treatises, some of them, it would appear in the form of historical romances, a style initiated by Xenophon in his Cyrupaedia. An anecdote brings him into communication with

Mubarrad, whom he satirized, and indeed vehemently lampooned.

The rest of the anecdotes in Yaqut's notice of this person throws no light, on his literary activities. They consist of fragments of his satires on the viziers and other distinguished persons of his time, and all that we can infer is that he received some pension from government funds. To one of the viziers he addressed a complaint when payment of this was delayed, and was reminded that such a complaint showed a want of personal pride; Isma'il b. Bulbul, of whom we have heard, promised him assistance, but did not actually grant it. Another vizier would not grant him admittance. Apparently his pension was not for historical researches, but for his poetry, of which only fragments cited by biographers survive.

A historian who has with justice acquired a high reputation, also belonging to this century, is Aḥmad b. Yaḥya Balādhuri, who died in 279. He was a courtier, quotes information given him by the Caliph Mutawakkil, and was appointed by Mu'tazz teacher of his son 'Abdallah.

Like Tabari he travelled far and wide in quest of information, to many cities of Syria, and among his teachers in Baghdad four men of note are mentioned, Ibn Abi Shaibah, Al-Qasim b. Sallam Abu'Ubaid, the famous author of the gharīb al-ḥadīth, Mada'ini and Waqidi's "secretary" Muḥammad b. Sa'd.

His name is said to have been derived from *Balādhur* a drug which his grandfather drank, and which produced madness in him. Besides pursuing

the study of history he practised the art of satire, and indeed ruthlessly : and upon distinguished men. An anecdote of considerable interest is told by Yaqut on Baladhuri's own authority. The Caliph Mutawakkil ordered Ibrahim b. 'Abbas al-Sūli to draw up a memoir delaying the payment of Kharāj and dating the commencement of its exaction by a Christian month. The memoir was read out in the presence of Mutawakkil and the vizier 'Ubaidallah b. Yaḥya, both of whom expressed their admiration of it. Baladhuri was present, and, as he confesses, moved by jealousy, remarked that it was defaced by an error. None of the others could detect it, but Baladhuri had done so. This was that the author supposed the Christian days like the Arabic to begin with the night, whereas of course they begin with the sunrise. The author of the memoir admitted his ignorance of the matter, and the Caliph ordered him to correct the error.

Two historical works of his are in our hands. One *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, is a record of the Islamic conquests, wherein each section usually gives some details as to the subsequent history of the country. The details are often, he tells us, gathered from local authorities : he visited the places and learned the ideas current on the spot with regard to the name of the conqueror, the mode of conquest, and subsequent events of importance. These details often include the allocation of districts to tribes, the transference of populations from one place to another, the foundations and completions of public monuments or works of utility, the source of particular names and other matters which it was important to

commemorate. Besides obtaining this local information, which was no doubt trustworthy to a great extent, he also made use of the works of earlier researchers, such as Waqidi through Muḥammad b. Sa'd, his secretary and the author of the Tabaqāt. That some uncertainty prevailed occasionally on matters of importance, and considerable inexactitude in dates owing to the practice of oral communication is clear. Yet it should be admitted that the amount of this is less than would have been expected. Where, as is often the case, Baladhuri reports conflicting accounts of the same events, the difference is ordinarily far from great. And this is true where he reproduces different copies of the same treaty. The purport is about the same, though the expression, the order of the sentences and occasionally some details have been varied by the caprices of the reporters' memories.

Of another work by this author, originally in 40 volumes, Ahlwardt identified one in a Berlin MS., Vol. XI, and it is said that others exist at Constantinople. This *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* is not a continuous history, but a collection of narratives dealing with particular events: for the *Futūḥ* of the other work we should substitute *Umūr* since the MSS. are headed by this word. The material of Book XI is largely the wars between 'Abdallah b. al-Zubair and 'Abd al-Malik, and those between the Khawārij of this time and the rivals for the Caliphate. A considerable amount of the same matter is recorded by Mubarrad in his Kamil, which is a linguistic rather than a historical work. Baladhuri in this treatise collects narratives which were put

into shape by 'Awanah, al-Haitham, al-Kalbi, and others: he quotes the ballads connected with the occasions very largely, sometimes admitting or observing that the verses are wrongly assigned, or refer to some different occasion. His dating of events is careful, but from the nature of his method there is no continuous order: the division of the history into separate episodes makes him go backwards as well as forwards in time. The work is of interest as indicating the intermediate stage between the separate narrative of Mada'in and the continuous history such as we find in Tabari. Baladhuri groups the events which belong to the same period together, but still treats them as units. In Tabari's work they have joined the main stream. At a later period they have quite lost their identity.

An author of this period many of whose works have come down to us is 'Abdallah b. Muslim b. Qutaibah, whose life lasted from 213-270. He was qāḍi of Dinawar, and is ordinarily known as Ibn Qutaibah. His most famous work, which has been interpreted by numerous commentators, is *Adab al-Katib*, a manual for the use of "writers," *i.e.*, classes in the bureaux. It is one of the three classical treatises in the department called *Adab*, *belles lettres*, the other two being the Bayān of Jaḥiz and the Kamil of Mubarrad. Its matter is grammatical and linguistic finesse: some centuries later the Katib is required to possess encyclopaedic information and the manual for his use runs into numerous volumes.

Of Ibn Qutaibah's historical works, one which

is called *al-Ma'ārif* is a compendium of historical information largely consisting of lists, facts connected with the Prophet, genealogical tables, names of sects and the like. The utility of the book is unquestionable, but it can scarcely be called history. Another work which is ascribed to him is very different in character. This is called "the Book of Sovereignty and Government," and is a history of the Islamic state from the death of the Prophet till that of Harun al-Rashid. Its falsification or ignorance of history is however so glaring that it cannot possibly be Ibn Qutaibah's work. It makes of Saffāḥ and the first 'Abbasid Caliph Abu' l-'Abbas two different persons: it supposes that Harun al-Rashid was the immediate successor of al-Mahdi, who, it says, died of poison administered to him by his son 'Abdallah. No such son is known to have existed. The author seems to display special interest in the affairs of Spain, of which he knows more than is ordinarily the case with Eastern writers, and to be a partisan of Malik whom he represents as succeeding in a debate with the representatives of Abu Hanifah. Perhaps then he is a Spanish romancer. Since the death of Harun al-Rashid scarcely marks an epoch in Muslim history, his ending his work with that event may give a clue to his date. He does not appear to allude to any subsequent event: and the mode wherein he deals with Harun's days and the story of the Banu Barmak is not unlike that of Tabari: apparently the halo of romance came to encircle those persons quite shortly after their demise: even in the middle of the third century this has taken place. Probably then in

reckoning this work as of the third century we are not going far astray.

In ease and charm of style this work is one of the most attractive of Arabic histories: the author is even more dramatic than Abu Hanifah, and claims to produce the letters which passed between the distinguished personages whose fortunes he narrates, and to reproduce their speeches and conversations. He rarely enlivens his narratives with quotations of poetry perhaps holding that his own method of rendering the story fascinating was the more likely to succeed. Like so many historians he is a keen partisan of 'Ali, and has little sympathy with or admiration for Mu'awiyah and his followers: indeed we have to go to Baladhuri's Futūḥ to appreciate their services to Islam: the labours of the Caliphs in organizing and administering are passed over with little attention by Tabari and others. The *Kitab al-imamah* is the more easily excusable in this matter, since its subject is clearly neither the expansion of Islam nor its internal organization but solely the mode wherein the sovereignty was either acquired or claimed: and since the events which followed on the murder of 'Uthman were of the utmost importance for the decision of this matter, the author is justified in treating them exhaustively, to the exclusion of other sorts of history. The chief exception made by this author is that of the campaign whereby the Maghrib and Spain were won under 'Abd al-Malik's sons, the hero of the campaign being Musa b. Nuṣair, who experienced terrible ingratitude for his services from the Caliph Sulaiman. Some

fabulous matter which meets us in later histories of these conquests already figures in this work, which in the main seems in these matters to adhere to facts. He rarely gives any authorities for his statements: it is noticeable that he quotes al-Haytham b. 'Adi with the formula "they state that al-Haytham said," suggesting that the works of this collector were known to the author by oral communication rather than from copies. When he produces letters his formula is "they state" that the following letter was sent by one person to another, and "they mention" that the latter sent the following reply. As has been seen, we find other writers produce the letters written on some of these occasions and they only agree to the extent which the circumstances under which they are said to have been written demand. Such documents, and such speeches or conversations as are produced together with them, do something to enliven the history and render it vivid but of course they are not a source of information. Certain facts were too well-known and too momentous to be shaken: the troubles which confronted 'Ali when he was put on the throne, leading to the rise of the Umayyad power: the transference of the seat of government from Medinah to Iraq and to Damascus: it might be said that every one who learned that the Prophet had migrated to Medinah and made the latter the metropolis of an empire would wish to know how the metropolis of Islam had come to be removed elsewhere, and how the family of Muḥammad's most persistent opponent had come to inherit his throne. The narrator of these events could, if he chose, enliven

them by making the parties talk, and where they were at a distance correspond: but the conversations and the letters were deduced from the facts, not *vice versa*. And since, as we have seen, different historians furnish different signatures to the same document, it is probable that the subordinate characters, who come in as messengers, or friends to be consulted, or officers in subordinate posts, are largely introduced by conjecture, though at times there may have been traditions in old families that an ancestor had taken part in one of these important events.

The author's imagination is strained in reproducing lengthy debates wherein many persons take part, *e.g.*, when Mu'awiyah proposes to proclaim Yazid and to demand that homage be sworn to him. There is a whole series of speeches, most in favour, some against the proposal: presently Mu'awiyah goes to Medinah in order to promote this project there and his conversations with the leading personages are repeated. He visits 'A'ishah, whose address to him is so eloquent that he is afraid to reply for fear of revealing his inferiority.

If the work before us is all by the same hand, the author cannot be acquitted of the charge of carelessness. He gives at the end of the first volume an exhaustive account of the affair of the Harrah, *i.e.*, the refusal of the people of Medinah to swear allegiance to Yazid after the death of Mu'awiyah, and the mission of Muslim b. 'Uqbah to reduce the place, with a selection from the terrible cruelties which were practised during the three days wherein Medinah was given up to pillage. But

when we come to the second volume the author has apparently forgotten all this thrilling and elaborate narrative, and gives another sketch of the same events without even a suggestion that the whole has been told already. Such procedure surprises us less in cases where an author is transcribing passages from a predecessor, without perhaps attending very carefully to their content: but it is astonishing in what is clearly intended as a work of art.

Although a historian writing under the Abbasids such as the real Ibn Qutaibah might be expected to be prejudiced against the Umayyads and say little in their favour, this author cannot be charged with excessive partisanship in this matter. About two of the Umayyad princes he is enthusiastic; these are Omar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz, who, as an ascetic and admirer of 'Ali is excepted even by Shi'ite authors from the general condemnation; in his case the author reports some miracles of a rather naïve sort. He is however even more effusive in his praise of Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik, whose days he regards as the zenith of the Caliphate: he received the tribute of the whole world, and by his staid and firm administration of justice, his readiness to listen to appeals, and the elaborate organization whereby he ascertained all that was going on in all parts of the empire, he produced a period of peace and prosperity such as had been previously unknown. These two sovereigns according to the author were very different in character notwithstanding their success as rulers: Omar II was so scrupulous about the use of the public money that he let his family go in rags: Hisham was so extravagant that

when he died there was not enough left to cover his funeral expenses. Whether the pictures drawn be faithful or not, this author's accounts of the separate Caliphs leave clear and vivid impressions, such as cannot so well be obtained from the dry narrative of Tabari.

A far more serious historian on a small scale is the writer known as Yaqubi, Aḥmad b. Isḥāq b. Ja'far. Yaqut has only a few lines about him, quoting a notice occurring in a historical work by Muhammad b. Yusuf al-Kindi which stated that he died in 284. He belonged to a family of clerks, and travelled far and wide; he composed a work on geography which was included by the de Goeje in his Library of Geographers. His historical work follows a plan which must have required considerable research to execute. Astrological details are given for the commencement of every reign, whence experts would be able to see how the course of events followed the conditions of the planets at its inauguration. At the end of each reign he records the names of the persons who had most influence with the sovereign, who led the Pilgrimage in each year, who conducted the raids, and who distinguished themselves as jurists. For the period of the Caliphate he rarely cites earlier historians; as he approaches his own time he occasionally mentions persons from whom he had derived information. His information for the time covered by his own life is exceedingly scanty, and is confined to the merest skeleton; for the Umayyad period and the early Abbasids he is somewhat fuller. He produces a large number of letters and speeches, some of

which are recorded by other historians; sometimes he describes the orations as "famous," and these are likely to be historical. He is a great admirer of 'Ali and deeply interested in the Imams, his descendants; many pages are devoted to wise and pious sayings attributed to these persons. Since he speaks of the Mutazilite doctrine as *tauḥid* "monotheism," it may be inferred that his sympathies were with that school, since that was the title which they themselves employed. He does not seem to have shared the scepticism which is associated with their system, since he records many a miraculous occurrence. His interest in ethics is evidently strong. He cites at length the dying injunctions of the Caliph Manṣur to his son, which are injunctions to virtue and piety, though this sovereign appears from the record to have been one of the most unscrupulous that ever reigned.

His information can occasionally be used to supplement the statements of Tabari, but it is too scanty to perform any considerable service in this respect. His work may be regarded as a serious compendium of the national history for the use of students, who had not time or desire to pursue the study very profoundly. The arrangement of the material according to reigns—unlike Tabari's arrangement by years—resembles that which is adopted in modern works of an analogous nature. The limited space which he allotted himself renders his accounts of events obscure, as he rarely has found room to explain their causes, and he possesses no great skill in selecting for narration those acts which are most indicative of character.

Although Tabari performed a noble service in collecting and arranging in chronological order the narratives which his predecessors had composed, and endeavouring to bring the history down to his own time, his work does not altogether supply the want of official and contemporary records for the earlier period. We may instance the story of the rise of the 'Abbasids. Tabari tells us how the claim made by Husain to the Caliphate fell after his death to Muḥammad b. al-Hanafiyyah, who transmitted it to the series of aspirants among whom al-Saffāḥ ultimately succeeded. But he also claims to produce the propagandist correspondence wherein Manṣūr defended his claim: and in this letter there is nothing about Ibn al-Hanafiyyah: Manṣūr claims the Caliphate on the ground that he is the representative of the Prophet's believing uncle, and this is the argument which the encomiasts of the 'Abbasids are never tired of producing. Yet in arguing with a descendant of 'Ali Manṣūr would surely have had a powerful weapon in the transmission of the claim from 'Ali to Ibn al-Hanafiyyah and from the latter to an 'Abbasid. It would seem then to be probable that this theory of transmission was produced some time after Manṣūr's controversy, as a reply to the 'Alawids, who were perpetually producing pretenders to the sovereignty. In this case as in some others inconsistencies escape Tabari's attention, when from his training as a jurist he might have been expected to notice them.

LECTURE VII.

Historians of the Fourth Century.

Arabic historical literature reaches its highest level in the century which witnessed the rise of the Buwaihids. Two authors in particular will occupy us: Miskawaihi and Muḥassin Tanukhi. The former was a student of Tabari's work which he heard from that Ibn Kamil who was the chief source of the biography of Tabari which was translated in the last lecture. Up to his own time he is a compiler utilizing the materials supplied him by Tabari and chiefly Thalit b. Sinan. When he comes to his own time, he tells us he obtained his information chiefly from two eminent men, well qualified to give it, the vizier of Mu'izz al-daulah, al-Muhallabi Abu Muḥammad al-Ḥassn, and the vizier of Rukn al-daulah Abu l 'Faḍl Ibn al-'Amid, whose librarian he was. He himself was afterwards in the service of the greatest of the Buwaihids, Aḍud al-daulah, after which time accounts of him become obscure. There is reason for thinking that he was employed by 'Aḍud al-daulah's son and successor Baha al-daulah and certain anecdotes bring him into close connexion with the famous vizier of Fakhr al-daulah, Ibn 'Abbad.

It is not clear whether Miskawaihi was himself a convert to Islam from Parsism, or whether

the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus, owing to the weakness of the Caliphate, was reconquering cities and provinces. The hero of the fights with the Christians at this time was Saif al-daulah, who at one time occupied Baghdad, having been in command of the forces of his brother Nāṣir al-daulah: his valour against the Byzantines is immortalized in Mutanabbi's verse. In Miskawaihi's account Saif al-daulah appears as a person of very moderate capacity, who proved on many occasions an incompetent commander. The fact that he sustained many serious defeats in his wars with the Byzantines is openly acknowledged. What pleases him more than anything in 'Aḍud al-daulah is his large-minded toleration to the different religious communities, which resulted in peace and prosperity.

Probably Miskawaihi was too prone to pass unfavourable judgments on the persons whose careers he records. His narrative is largely a narrative of ambition, intrigue, and treachery, with few redeeming features. Even the virtuous vizier, 'Ali b. 'Isa, is charged by him with ambition and the desire to monopolize the administration: his admiration for Muhallabi does not prevent his recording the unscrupulous extortion whereby he obtained money for Mu'izz al-daulah's palace. In order to justify his title "The Experiences of the Nations" he has to record scandals which otherwise would be regarded as unedifying: the tricks whereby viziers were overthrown or appointed, the sordid lures whereby men were induced to betray their masters or relatives, the place occupied in great affairs of state by superstition and stupidity. Probably he would

have defended his persistence in recording these matters by the need for the instruction of statesmen.

Although Miskawaihi is not a writer who aims at elegance, like 'Utbi or afterwards 'Imad al-din, he displays great power both as a portrayer of character and as a narrator of thrilling scenes. The numerous figures who come to the front in the process whereby the Caliphate gave way to the domination of foreign adventurers, and in the period which follows, are easily distinguishable and their features adhere to the memory. For the earlier period one may illustrate by the career of the Baridis, with Abu Abdallah as the towering figure of the trio. Miskawaihi has been criticized for attributing to the weak and fickle Muqtadir the ruin of the Caliphate and the break up of the empire : but with the example before him of what had been done by the capable Mu'taḍid in restoring the might of both after the long period of anarchy which ensued on the death of Muthawakkil it is not clear that he is mistaken.

Intentionally or otherwise he has introduced into his narrative a series of thrilling scenes, which when once read are not easily forgotten. Such are the trial of Ḥallaj, the death of Ibn al-Furat and his son Muḥassin, the loyalty of Abu'l-Haija the Ḥamdaind to al-Qahir when he had first been put on Muqtadir's throne, the imprisonment and death of the vizier Ibn Muqlah.

If it is true that Miskawaihi was by profession a medical man, he has allowed few traces of that profession to appear in the work : only once, appa-

rently, does he display any special knowledge of medical technicalities. Abu Ḥayyan asserts that he wasted his time and substance on the pursuit of alchemy: of this his work appears to offer no trace. Like other savants of his time he attached some importance to astrology: thus he explains the almost simultaneous demise of a number of eminent princes in the year 356 by an astrological conjunction: but in the portion of his chronicle which has been edited and translated astrology is far less prominent than in the fragment of Hilal's history, where an extraordinary anecdote of a successful prediction is produced.

In the main Miskawaihi displays an attitude of scepticism towards the supernatural, which is very like that of our own times: when he tells a case of a veridical dream, an experience of Rukn al-daulah which was afterwards exactly realised, he apologizes for narrating it; only the high authority of his patron Ibn al-'Amid, and his great reputation as a philosopher justify him in telling such a story. In his account of the trial and death of the mystic Ḥallāj he clearly regards this man as a vulgar impostor: nevertheless he appears to find fault with the vizier Ḥamid b. al-'Abbas for urgently demanding his execution, though Ḥamid seems to have been moved thereto by a genuine belief that such claims as Ḥallāj made constituted a danger to the empire.

The class to which Miskawaihi belonged, and with whose interests he is mainly in sympathy, is that of the *Kātibs* or state-secretaries, who in his opinion had a right to the vizierate, since it was only through the training which their profession re-

quired that the proper qualifications for that office could be obtained. They were the persons who not only learned the proper style for the composition of state-papers, but they also were initiated into those geographical and statistical details which were required for the financial administration of the empire. Hence he so bitterly resents the promotion to the vizierate of Abu Ṭāhir Ibn Baqiyyah, who commenced life as an official in the royal kitchen, but by competence rose to the highest place. Nevertheless his story shows this Ibn Baqiyyah in favourable contrast to Bakhtiyar as a man of courage, resource, and resolution.

Miskawaihi at times mentions his authorities, and these are usually members of this profession: what might be called permanent officials of the bureaux, or at any rate persons who had been in the employ of the viziers and thus had had access to the talk of the court, wherein many secrets, not always of a creditable sort, were divulged. Abu Shujā' asserts that he copied almost verbally the history of the Buwaihids, composed by the secretary Abu Isḥaq Ibrahim, and called the Tājī after 'Aḍud al-daulah's title Taj al-Millah. If this be the case, it is observable that Miskawaihi nowhere acknowledges this obligation, as he does to a chronicler of the same sect, Thabit b. Sinan. The fragments of the Tājī preserved by 'Utbi and Tha'alibi are not sufficient to enable us to tell whether Abu Shujā's assertion is near the facts or not. One would expect that the style of Ibrahim the Sabian would exhibit more literary artifice than Miskawaihi, who is throughout exceedingly simple, displays.

If the story be true that Ibrahim described his history as a pack of lies, and thereby came near incurring 'Aḍud al-daulah's vengeance, this would throw grave doubts on Miskawaihi's record of the beginnings of the Buwaihids. That narrative rarely excites suspicion, as it is far from favourable to the family : of whose founder, Buwaihi, it says nothing. Later authors introduce the inevitable dream whereby the fame of his descendants is announced to this personage. 'Imad al-daulah, the real founder of their fortunes, is represented as a dexterous, but quite unscrupulous adventurer. The story that with a force of 300 he defeated an imperial army of 10,000 suggests doubts as to the figures, but in Miskawaihi's account it explains the ease with which 'Imad al-daulah was able to collect an army round him : nothing succeeds like success. The stories of the extraordinary luck whereby 'Imad al-daulah acquired wealth seem more like fabrications : the discovery of secret hoards was often claimed by sovereigns who wished to escape the ignominy which attached to the accumulation of wealth by extortion. 'Aḍud al-daulah himself is said to have revised Ibrahim's narrative before publication, and though we know of him as a capable but ambitious and unscrupulous ruler, we do not know to what extent he would have wished to glorify his relatives. His father Rukn al-daulah receives from Miskawaihi by far the most favourable notice : but it appears from the narrative that the relations between 'Aḍud al-daulah and his father were strained to the breaking point, owing to Rukn al-dualah's loyalty to the memory of his brother Mu'izz al-daulah, whose son

Bakhtiyar 'Aḍud al-daulah wished to oust from his throne, as eventually he succeeded in doing. The expedient whereby a final meeting between father and son was arranged without derogation to the dignity of either evidently rests in Miskawaihi's narrative on the authority of some member of the 'Amid family.

For the part of Miskawaihi's narrative which *precedes* that for which he claims the authority of the viziers whom he served his main source is doubtless the history of Thabit b. Sinan, who died in 365, and whose history extended from the commencement of Muqtadir's reign to the year 361. Miskawaihi occasionally quotes him for his personal experiences : being court physician he had access to many state secrets. The usurper Bachkam asked him for advice on the question how to practice self-control : and he advised this remarkable personage to delay punishment, and so give his passion time to cool. He attended the vizier Ibn Muqlah when his hand had been amputated, and Miskawaihi produces a thrilling scene. This author belonged to the Ṣabian community, of which we should like to know more : they produced several persons famous as scientists, physicians and secretaries of state. Hilal, who took up Thabit's history where it ended, and of whose work a fragment is preserved, was the first of his family to accept Islam. This court physician, like the famous Bakhtishū' family, would be an excellent authority for the affairs of his time : and other authorities whom Miskawaihi could and did employ were secretaries of state or persons connected with those who were behind the scenes, and were ac-

quainted with the hidden motives, and not unwilling to reveal them.

One other authority utilized by Miskawaihi was a work still in existence, the *waraqah* or "leaf" of Muḥammad b. Yaḥya Sūlī, like Balādhuri a companion and entertainer of many Caliphs, who died in 336. He was famous as a chess player: his play according to one of these Caliphs was a fairer sight than any which could be imagined. His skill at the game was so great that some supposed him to have invented it! Yaqut's notice of him is unfortunately very scanty, but from his association with the Caliphs he had the opportunities which were so valuable of understanding the secrets of the administration, the intrigues which were constantly in operation for the upsetting of viziers and provincial governors. His literary work besides the memoirs called al-Waraqah contained lists of poets and men of note, a history of the viziers which is occasionally quoted, and a history of the Qarmatians, which might be of value, since the accounts which we possess of this remarkable and terrible sect are all of them so hostile that our knowledge of it is scanty and supplements would be desirable. Even Tabari, who witnessed the origin of the movement, is unable to do more than offer guesses about the origin of the name. In the Jewish Arabic of the time the verb means "to rebel," but it is obvious that this verb is derived from the name of the sect.

Muhassin b. 'Ali al-Tanukhi was not like Miskawaihi a Persian by origin, but of a true Arab tribe, Tanukh, which produced in the next century the famous Abu'l-'Ala Ma'arri. His grandfather is

mentioned in a story told in the Table-talk : Antioch, where the family was settled, had during the troubles of the Zanji rebellion, been occupied by the Byzantines, and recovered by Mu'taḍid, who vowed that he would rase the walls. The citizens dreaded this measure, and sent a deputation, headed by Tanukhi, to request the Caliph to desist from so perilous a measure. The Caliph however, having sworn to do something, could not change : the expedient suggested by Tanukhi, and which found acceptance, was that men should be employed for one day to demolish the wall, but that after that all able-bodied men in the city should unite in repairing it. This person's son 'Ali who was born in 278 left Antioch in his youth for Baghdad, studied law in the system of Abu Hanifah, and was made judge of several districts in Iraq : he came near being made chief justice in Baghdad itself. Like other eminent officials his services were employed by the adventurers who rose to power at this time on confidential missions or other occasions when trustworthy agents were wanted.

His skill in a variety of descriptions is celebrated, chief among these being poetry; when he lost his post in Baghdad, he took refuge with Saif al-daulah, whom he eulogized in verse : and Saif al-daulah, whose taste in such matters was indisputable, was so pleased with the compliment that he used his influence to get him re-instated. His grandson 'Ali b. Muḥassin was also a man of note, being one of the instructors of the Khatib Baghdadi. Of more permanent fame than either of these is the intermediate Muḥassin b. 'Ali, whose life lasted

from 329-384 : he was born in Bashrah and died in Baghdad. He was for a time deputy qaḍi to the chief justice Ibn Abi'l-Shawarib, and afterwards held Judgeships in various cities of Mesopotamia and Persia, separately and combined. He owed his promotion to the vizier Muhallabi, who put on a special appearance of intimacy with this Tanukhi to impress the chief justice, who was duly impressed "and almost carried me on his heart." He got into favour with 'Aḍud al-daulah, who apparently admired his poetry and requested him to commerce the recitations at his receptions. He lost favour with the Buwaihid prince when they were in Hamadhan, and when the prince was visited by his brother's vizier the Saḥib Ibn 'Abbad the prince intended to arrest the Sahib, and Tanukhi was charged with having heard and divulged this secret, whereby the plan was frustrated. The story, in which Tankuhi denies the charge, but managed to avenge himself on his accusers, is told at rather tedious length and in a manner which sheds a painful light on the morals of the time. Tanukhi admits that he received some handsome gifts from the Sahib, but does not say for what services : 'Aḍud al-daulah supposed it was for this communication. This offence however was pardoned, and at a later period 'Aḍud al-daulah employed him on a mission to the Caliph of so difficult and disagreeable a nature that he shammed sickness to be relieved of it. By a ruse 'Aḍud al-daulah discovered that the sickness was counterfeited, and forbade the qaḍi to leave his house : he had to be interned there till the prince died.

Three works of this person are in existence in whole or part. One is a collection of saying attributed to Apostles and other persons of importance. Another, probably the best known, is his *Deliverance after Stress*, of which something has previously been said: the largest, which it took him twenty years, from 360-380, to compose is called "Collection of Histories" or "The Cud of Table-talk," in eleven volumes, of which the first has been published with translation, and the eighth is about to be published. Whether the remaining nine volumes are anywhere in existence is at present unknown. The work is quoted by a great number of writers (several of whom misread the first word of the title) as it is a storehouse of anecdotes belonging to very different regions. The author, who prefixed a preface to each part, gives a list of about a hundred different subjects treated: and he seems even in the first volume to have kept his promise about all. Living all his life in the society of the prominent personages in Iraq, or Persia, and in particular coming into close contact with persons who had collected all they could discover about the history of their immediate predecessors and their contemporaries, he was able to acquire a great deal of curious information, which forms a welcome supplement to the meagre chronicle of Tabari. Much of his information has also reached the treatise on the viziers by Hilal who embodies the same traditions, sometimes mentioning this Tanukhi's name, sometimes only Tanukhi's authority. In the latter case it may be that he received the same tradition from another hearer. The occasions wherein he coincides with Miskawaihi in the

reproduction of matter are rarer, though without access to the whole of the work, nothing precise can be said about their relation.

It is in the main Tanukhi's intention to restrict his work to anecdotes which had not previously been published in any book : but he does not observe that rule very strictly. Several are to be found in both volumes which were also introduced by him into his earlier work " Deliverance after Stress." In the main, however, the matter which he inserted in his " Table-talk " is likely to have been transmitted orally up to that time, after which biographers and historians made use of it for their own purposes. In Yaqut's biographical Dictionary many anecdotes both from the found volumes and the lost are reproduced, having been noticed by Yaqut when collecting his material for the biographies. Abu 'Ali, a common kunyah which varies its import with the subject which is being treated, in Yaqut's Dictionary usually means Tanukhi.

The anecdotes which refer to the viziers of the fourth century, Ibn al-Furat, 'Ali B. ' Isa, Ibn Muqlah, and others, got into Hilal's treatise on the Viziers : unfortunately that work like Jahshiyari's is fragmentary, and though Miskawaihi is copious in his treatment of the Buwaihid viziers, many an anecdote which belongs to this period, and rests on good authority, has escaped him, or not been thought worthy of insertion by him. These are invariably of interest for the light which they throw either on the manners of the time or the characters of the leading men. The period however for which Tanukhi's collections are of the greatest value is for

the third century of Islam, where after the death of Ma'mun the chronicles become curiously inadequate. The relations beween the viziers, the intrigues whereby they secured office, the various degrees of gratitude and ingratitude which they displayed, their superstitions and fancies are illustrated with great clearness, and figures like those of Sa'id, 'Ubaidallah b. Qasim, Isma'il b. Bulbul, and Ibn al-Furat's brother 'Abbas b. Muhammad, which in the chronicle are shadowy, gradually acquire flesh and blood.

Here is one of Tanukhi's Indian tales. He includes it in his work Deliverance after Stress as well as in the Table-talk.

I was told by Abi'l-Husain, who was told by Abi Fadl b. Bahmad of Siraf, who was famous for his expeditions to the most distant countries separated by seas. I was told, he said, by one of the Indian *Maisūr* (a word which means one who is born in India as a Moslem), how he was in a certain Indian state where the King was of good character. He would however neither take nor give facing any one, but would turn his hand behind his back and take and give thus. This was out of respect for his office, and in acordance with their practice. This particular King died, when his throne was seized by an usurper: a son of the former king, who was suited to reign, fled for fear of his life from the man who had seized the power. It is a practice of the Indian kings that if one of them leave his seat for any purpose, he must have on him a vest, with a pocket containing all sorts of precious gems, such as rubies, folded in satin. The value of these gems is

sufficient to found a kingdom with if necessary. Indeed they say he is no king who leaves his seat without having on his person sufficient for the establishment of a great kingdom should a disaster compel him to take flight.

When the catastrophe which has been mentioned befell the realm, the son of the deceased king took his vest and fled with it. He afterwards related how he walked for three days. During these he tasted no food, having with him neither silver nor gold wherewith he could purchase any, being too proud to beg, and unable to exhibit what he had on his person. So, he said I sat on the kerb, and presently an Indian approached with a wallet on his shoulder. He put this down, and sat down in front of me. I asked him where he was going. He mentioned a certain *Judain* (an Indian word for hamlet). I told him that I was making for the same, and suggested that we should be companions, to which he agreed. I was hoping that he would offer me some of his food. He took up his wallet, ate, while I watched him, but offered me nothing, while I was unwilling to take the initiative and ask. He then packed up his wallet, and started to walk. I started walking after him, hoping that humanity, good fellowship and honour would induce him to behave differently. However he acted at night as he had acted in the day. Next morning we started walking again, and his conduct was the same as before. This went on for seven days, during which I tasted nothing. On the eighth I found myself very weak, without power to move. Then I noticed a hamlet by the roadside, and men building with a

foreman directing them. So I quitted my companion and went up to the manager and asked him to employ me for a wage to be paid me in the evening like the others. He said, Very well, hand them the mortar. So I proceeded to take the mortar, and in accordance with the royal custom I kept turning my hand behind my back to hand them the mortar : only whenever I recollected that this was a mistake and might forfeit me my life, I hastened to correct it and turn my hand in the right direction before I attracted attention. However, he said, a woman who was standing there noticed me and told her master about me, adding that I must certainly be of a royal family. So he told her to see that I did not go off with the other bricklayers, and she retained me, they went off. The master then brought me oil and scent for ablution, which is their mode of showing honour. When I had washed they brought rice and fish, which I ate. The woman then offered herself in marriage to me, and I made the contract, which was immediately carried out. I remained with her four years, looking after her estate, as she was a woman of fortune. One day, when I was seated at the door of her house, there appeared a native of my country. I asked him in, and when he entered, inquired whence he came. He mentioned my own country, and I asked him, What are you doing here? He replied : We had a virtuous King, and when he died his throne was seized by a man who was not of the royal blood : the former king had a son qualified to reign, who, fearing for his life, took to flight. The usurper oppressed his subjects, who rose and put him to death. We are now wandering over the

countries in search of the son of the deceased king with the intention of setting him on his father's seat: only we have no trace of him —I said to him Do you know me? He said, No.—I told him that I was the person he was seeking, and produced the tokens: he admitted the truth of what I said, and made obeisance. I bade him conceal our business till we had reached the country, and he agreed. I then went to my wife and told her the facts, including the whole story! I then gave her the vest, with an account of its contents and its purpose. I told her I was going with the man, and if his story turned out to be true, the token should be that my messenger should come to her and remind her of the vest: in that case she was to come away with him. If the story proved to be a plot, then the vest was to be her property. The prince went with the man, whose story proved to be true. When he approached the city he was greeted with homage, and was seated on the throne. He sent some one to fetch his wife. When they were re-united and he was established on his throne, he ordered a vast mansion to be erected, to which every one who passed through his territory should be brought to be entertained there for three days, and furnished with provisions for three more. This he did having in his mind the man who had been his companion on his journey, who, he imagined would fall into his hand. He also in building this mansion wished to manifest gratitude to Almighty God for deliverance from his troubles while saving people from the distress which had befallen him. After a year he inspected the guests—he had been in the habit of inspecting them every month,

and not seeing the man he wanted, dismissing them —and on a particular day saw the man among them. When his eye fell on him, he gave him a betel leaf, which is the highest honour that a sovereign can bestow on a subject. When the king did this, the man made obeisance and kissed the ground. The king bade him rise and looking at him perceived that he did not recognise the King. He ordered the man to be well looked after, and entertained, and when this was done summoned him and said : Do you know me? The man said : How could I fail to know the King, who is so mighty and exalted! The King said : I was not referring to that : do you know who I was before this state? The man said, No. The King then reminded him of the story and how he had withheld food from the prince for seven days when they were on the read. The man was abashed, and the King ordered him to be taken back to the mansion, and entertained. Presently he was found to be dead. The Indian liver is abnormally large, and chagrin had been too much for this man, whose liver it affected so that he died.

LECTURE VIII.

Later Historians.

In the work of Miskawaihi Arabic historical composition seems to reach its highest point for the reasons that have been offered. With the portion of his work which was afterwards excerpted by Ibn al Athir for his universal history the late Mr. Amedroz combined (1) the continuation by Abu Shujā, vizier of Muqtadi, 481-484, who died in 503; (2) the continuation of Sinan's Chronicle by Hilal the Sabian, of which however only a fragment is accessible. What is recorded of Abu Shujā' Rudhbari shows him to have been a pious and conscientious man: and to these qualities his chronicle bears evidence. Intellectually he is decidedly inferior to Miskawaihi; moreover he goes out of his way to flatter the Seljuqs, contrasting their achievements with those of the Buwaihids. Neither does he display anything like the practical acquaintance with and interest in the administration of the empire which Miskawaihi had acquired from his association with Ibn al-'Amid and Muhallabi.

Hilal's history is preceded in Amedroz's first edition by the fragment of his work on the viziers, which deals almost exclusively with the viziers of Muqtadir, Ibn al-Furat 'Ali b. 'Isā, and Ibn Muqlah. We find the source of many of his anecdotes in the Nishwār, which was described yesterday. At times he cites Tanukhi directly, at others he cites Tanukhi's authorities. As however Tanukhi uses the phrase "I was told by," whereas Hilal employs

"We were told by," he may in all cases be citing Tanukhi, who was contemporary with the authority, whereas Hilal was too late, belonging to the third generation. As a *Katib*, *i.e.*, a permanent official at one of the bureaux, he had some of the intimate acquaintance with business which we find in Miskawaihi.

There are two authors whose phenomenal industry makes them conspicuous in the fifth and sixth centuries respectively. These are al-Khatib of Baghdad and Ibn 'Asakir of Damascus. The former was born in 392. and died in 463. Yaqut regards him as the person with whom the series of traditionalists terminated, but this formula must not be strictly interpreted. He followed the example of Tabari and others who travelled far and wide in search of information: his journeys took him through Persia, Syria, and Mesopotamia. He told the story of his making three wishes when he drank of the Zamzam water at the Pilgrimage: they were that he might lecture on the history of Baghdad in Baghdad: that he might dictate tradition in the Mosque of al-Manṣur in the metropolis: and that when he died he might be buried by the grave of Bishr the Barefoot. All three wishes were fulfilled. The first was the easiest: on his return to the metropolis after his wanderings he opened a course on the history of Baghdad. The second was obtained less directly. He got hold of a note-book which contained traditions dictated by the Caliph Qa'im: he solicited permission to hear them from the Caliph. The Caliph, aware of his fame as a traditionalist, felt sure that this must be a device

for soliciting a favour : and when asked what favour he required, he replied that what he wanted was permission to recite traditions in the Mosque of Manṣur. The Caliph, we are told, gave orders to the Naqib al-nuqaba or Chief Registrar that such permission should be accorded.

The third wish was the hardest to secure. The place in the cemetery in which the Khaṭib desired to rest had already been secured by some one else, who had dug himself a grave and was accustomed to go thither and read the Qur'an through. When he was asked to yield possession to the Khaṭib, he declined, pointing out how much this meant to him. A man of authority proceeded to argue with him. Supposing, he said, Bishr the Barefoot were alive, which of the two would sit by his side : you or the Khaṭib? He admitted that the honour would be given to the Khaṭib. Does not, the advocate urged, the analogy apply to the case of the dead? The owner of the tomb gave way to this reasoning and so the Khaṭib's third wish was realized.

It is recorded as an example of his expert knowledge how when a Jew produced a document which he declared to be a remission of jizyah from the Jews of Khaibar written by 'Ali b. Abi Ṭālib at the Prophet's order, the Khaṭib detected the forgery by pointing to anachronisms in the names of the witnesses : one had died two years before the taking of Khaibar, another did not adopt Islam till a year later. This learning was so rare that the vizier of the time gave orders that no Traditions of the Prophet should be taught in Baghdad without the Khaṭib's authorization!

It is interesting to note that among the teachers of Tradition whom the Khaṭib heard was a lady—Karimah, daughter of Aḥmad of Marw, with whom he read the Saḥiḥ of Bukhari in five days! Probably the work was thoroughly familiar to both of them, but even so the time seems phenomenally short.

The source of the Khaṭib's information is said to have been a library collected by one Ghaith b. 'Ali of Tyre (al-Suri): at his death he left twelve bales of books with a sister. The Khaṭib, during his stay in that town obtained access to these books, and thence procured the material for his own, which were 55 in number.

His classes in the Syrian mosques such as that of Tyre were crowded: but the Khaṭib said he would sooner have a scanty audience in the Mosque of Manṣūr in the metropolis than speak to a crowded congregation elsewhere: apparently the importance of the metropolis was not affected by the fortunes of the Caliphate till the Mongol storm. A descendant of 'Ali coming to the Mosque of Tyre where the Khaṭib was lecturing offered him a present of dinars from one of the notables. The Khaṭib declined the gift: the 'Alawid guessed that perhaps the Khaṭib thought it too small, and proceeded to pour on to the praying carpet 300 dinars. The Khaṭib took up the carpet and flung the dinars on to the ground. "I shall never forget," says the narrator, "how proud the Khaṭib looked, and how humiliated was the 'Alawid when he had to pick up the dinars from the holes in the ground and the interstices between the mats." In another story his life

was threatened in Damascus by a follower of the Shi'ah who was governor of the place. The officer ordered to put him to death made him take refuge in the house of an 'Alawid who told the governor that the death of so eminent a man would be avenged by a massacre of the Shi'ah in Baghdad: he was therefore allowed to escape to Tyre.

The first place in the list of his writings is occupied by the History of Baghdad, which is in the main a dictionary of biography, though this is preceded by a description of the city. There follows a list of books connected with technicalities of the Tradition, some of them in defence of Shafi'i, of whose system the Khaṭib became an ardent follower, after first having followed that of Ibn Hanbal. Some others are in the style of the titles of the works of Jāḥiz, the Book of the Misers, the Book of the Parasites, the Book of Notification of the Charms of Autumn. His powers of memory were what excited admiration: but some detractor maintained that he was unable to rely on it for answers to questions and invariably requested time to prepare replies.

An even vaster list of works is attached to the name of Ibn 'Asakir, Ali b. al-Hasan, 499-571. Like the Khaṭib he travelled far and wide after hearing the sheikhs of Damascus; five years were spent in Baghdad, others in the Hijaz, Ispahan, Merw, Herat, Raqqah, Kufah; among his instructors were 1,300 men and over 80 women. The greatest of his works was the History of Damascus, at first in 570 afterwards in 800 parts: like the History of Baghdad it begins with an account of the city and proceeds to

an alphabetical dictionary of men who either lived there or had something to do with the place. The description of Damascus is disappointingly scanty, and was easily superseded by a later topography: the dictionary of biography is a meritorious work, largely utilised by Yaqut: Ibn 'Asakir himself takes much from the Khaṭib It is swollen to its vast dimensions by the Isnads and the repetition of the same matter by different "roads:" thus a folio is devoted to Abu Bakr the first Caliph, who is supposed to have visited the city in early days: but the volume contains only a few sayings attributed to this Caliph, the pages being filled with endless repetitions. In the edition which some scholars have commenced at Damascus these *Asānīd* are omitted, and the bulk correspondingly reduced.

The vast list of his other works contains mention of some auto biographical material: a dictionary in twelve parts of persons from whom he had heard traditions, or who had heard them from him: collections of all sorts dealing with various aspects of Tradition, theological questions and others. The list with the details of the bulk of each work is overwhelming. Many of the works may have been little more than masses of material: but the biographical portions of the History of Damascus which have been printed furnish indications of great industry in collecting names of persons, arranging them in alphabetical order, and ascertaining facts about them.

As has been seen, a personage to whom he devoted special attention was the first Caliph. His son recorded how after he had delivered seven lec-

tures on this Caliph's merits, and then changed the subject for the wickedness of the Jews and their eternal punishment, a friend of the family came and narrated how he had seen Abu Bakr in a dream, and informed him that Ibn 'Asakir had delivered these seven lectures on his virtues. Ibn 'Asakir when he heard this held up four fingers, and stated that there were yet four more lectures ready to be delivered on the same theme. The friend does not seem to have recorded what observations the phantom made on this matter.

Unlike many provincials who failed to win the admiration of the metropolis he appears to have succeeded in securing it; he was one of three visitors from Damascus who surpassed all the sheikhs whom the people of Baghdad had seen, and indeed was the greatest of the three. Yet he was said to have made little money by his attainments. His son, when asked how he had fared in this matter, replied that pecuniary gains had never interested Ibn 'Asakir: for forty years his time had been entirely devoted to reading, writing and lecturing. The questioner rejoined that he himself had been more fortunate: his studies had earned him the sum of twelve thousand dinars, whereby he had built a house and a mosque and a library. The story naturally led to comments on the scantiness of the returns which theological and historical researches produced. Many a poet had earned ten times that sum by a single ode.

For the period which follows the point at which Hilal's narrative breaks off we are seriously handicapped by the want of original authorities. We learn the names of chroniclers, but their works have not

yet come to light. After the struggles between the branches of the Buwaihid family which Abu Shujā' (not himself an original authority) and Hilal narrate, the centre of affairs is transferred from Baghdad to Shiraz, and the Seljuq Sultans who wrested power from the Buwaihids chose capitals of their own. It is clear for many reasons that Baghdad remained the literary metropolis, but the centre of power had shifted elsewhere, and the Eastern Caliphate was hopelessly split. When in the sixth century the Caliph again became an independent ruler, his realm was a small fraction of its whilom extent.

The period of the Buwaihids after Baha al-daulah is therefore very scantily recorded, and of the Seljuqs we have in Arabic no satisfactory history: the work of Bundari survives in an extract by 'Ima dal-din Isfahani, who pays far more attention to elegant language than to facts. A historian who brought the history of Islam down to the year 575 was the preacher Abu'l-Faraj Ibn al-Jauzi (508-597), of whose sermons the traveller Ibn Jubair speaks with enthusiasm. Of the many works which he composed some have seen the light: one on the exploits of 'Umar II, and one on the *adhkiyā*, shrewd men, a collection of marvellous and entertaining anecdotes, including some detective stories. His chronicle, the Muntazim, in twelve volumes, experienced the fate of many bulky works of this type; the volumes were dispersed, and separate portions have found their way into different libraries. In this work the obituary notices form an important part of each year's events, and this practice, which is followed to a moderate extent by Ibn al-Athir,

comes from this time more and more into vogue : the chronicle assumes a form resembling that of the Annual Register, wherein a very terse epitome of events is followed by lists of obits, at times swelling into lengthy biographies.

Gibbon's assertion that the Arabic historian is either the dry chronicler or the flowery orator becomes true after Miskawaihi's time, but not before. It would not be true of Tabari, Mas'udi or Miskawaihi; it comes somewhat nearer truth in the historians who follow them, but is probably based on those late authors to whom Gibbon had access in Latin translations, especially Abu'l-Fida, the dry chronicler and Ibn 'Arabshah, the flowery orator. The task which the chroniclers set themselves is apt to be so colossal that they have not time to do more than excert earlier works : the stylists set themselves more moderate tasks, but their interest lies not in separating important facts from unimportant and rendering the sequence of events intelligible, but in finding choice phrases, classical synonyms, figures of speech and rhymes.

In the vast range of universal dynastic, regional and local chronicles which we possess there is of course great variety displayed in all the qualities which can enter into historical writing of any sort : accuracy, inpartiality, discrimination, power of arresting the reader's attention and maintaining his interest. If none of those works which have been translated into a European language have acquired any sort of popularity in Europe, the reason probably lies less in their want of merit in these matters than in the unfamiliarity of the European with the

names and the institutions with which they deal. Thus although the romances composed by the late Jurji Zaidan on Islamic History were widely read in Egypt and other Arabic-speaking countries, English publishers held that translations of them would be unsaleable; the sentiments to which they appeal would be wanting.

Of many Arabic historians it may be said that either their work is too mechanical, being the reproduction or possibly abridgment of texts or narratives which were before them, or, if time was devoted to the composition, it had been employed in literary artifices which would disappear in translation, and so might be said to effect the externals rather than the essence of the narrative. There is of course one notable exception to this : the work of Ibn Khaldūn, 732-808. His historical work, in which the dynasties are separately treated, with the consequence that much of the matter is repeated, but which is of unique value for the records of African affairs which it preserves, is indeed of the dry type : a very bare narrative of events. But the initial volume of Prolegomena is unique in Arabic literature with few parallels in any that existed prior to the invention of printing, in that it embodies the author's generalizations drawn from the study of the records which form the subject of the following volumes. The idea is curiously like that of Aristotle, who drew up or caused to be drawn up accounts of a great number of constitutions, and from his observations of what happened composed his great treatise on Politics. Both assume that there is a uniformity in human conduct

comparable to the uniformity of nature: that certain modes of life develop certain tendencies: both eliminate so far as possible all elements that are exceptional and draw their inferences from normal occurrences, the repetition of which after the like antecedents justifies them in formulating rules. Ibn Khaldūn does not like Aristotle aspire at creating an ideal state: he is of opinion rather that human affairs follow a natural course and expects nothing but recurrence of the same series of which his historical studies had furnished so many examples. The result is a philosophy of history, far removed from any evolutionary philosophy, because it does not contemplate continuous progress, but strictly limited forms of it, which bear the seeds of destruction; the effete population of the towns must regularly give way to the vigorous immigrants from the wilds. And it might have been possible to foretell the future of North Africa with fair accuracy from the theories propounded by the Khaldūn.

His Prolegomena are not confined to philosophical speculations: he furnishes a useful compendium of the subjects which occupied the attention of the Muslims outside politics, showing that in his idea the function of history extended beyond the material which furnishes the annalists with their main topics: including literary, juristic and scientific development, the origins of sects, and the like.

It does not appear that any other Arabic writer worked on lines similar to those of Ibn Khaldūn. Attempts had indeed been made to put into Arabic in intelligible form the results of the Greek thinkers on politics: but unfamiliarity with the institutions

on which the Greeks based their study of the subject rendered such attempts at reproduction singularly infelicitous: the writers clearly grope in the dark. On the other hand those who conceive their task to consist in ascertaining the mutual rights and duties of autocrats and subjects arrive at little which does not lie on the surface.

After Ibn Khaldūn there is no lack of Arabic historians, Egypt being especially rich in chronicles for the Ayyubid and Mamluke period: among these are comprehensive histories, narrating events year by year, and biographies of individual Sultans, which, as was seen, cannot be distinguished from history. A writer of eminence among these is Makrizi, whose topography of Cairo is superior to any account which we possess in Arabic of any other city: it is also a mine of antiquities, and exhibits more industrious preparation and research than such polygraphs ordinarily have time to expend on their works. His history of the Mamluke Sultans, of which there is a French translation, though the original has not yet been printed, is not inferior to the mass of chronicles, but scarcely rises above the average in any respect. Several of these Egyptian histories are, like Dhabali's History of Islam, far more a collection of obituary notices than a continuous history: the authors take trouble to collect the obits, arrange them in alphabetical order, and record what they know about them.

An exception must be made in favour of the History of Egypt by Ibn Iyas, which, after a brief sketch of events prior to the Mamluke period, carries the narrative down to the Ottoman Conquest. The

language is from the purest point of view unclassical: the author employs a vast number of words which the dictionaries do not recognize: he occasionally condescends to cite verses in the vernacular of the time. Much of his space is occupied with enumerating the changes among the office-holders, who in the Mamluke system of government were numerous, and had their functions clearly defined. His style and mode of thought display rather more individuality than is to be found in most of the annalists: he obviously takes great delight in recording how popular superstitions were belied by events. Although the latter part of his history was composed under Turkish domination, he has no hesitation in ridiculing the Turks, and expressing his contempt for them. One notable effect of the Turkish victory however was that the series of Egyptian Chronicles came to an end.

Ibn Iyas does not rise to the height of Miskawaihi in composing picturesque and thrilling scenes, and portraying characters which the reader will envisage, and keep distinct in his mind: his details are for the most part too dry and scanty to serve this purpose: the impression which he leaves is however that of an honest narrator of ascertained facts, and a careful observer, who notes down and records matters of which the knowledge will prove valuable. Hence for antiquities in the sense of illustrations of manners and customs, notices of public works and other matters which the historians often neglect, his chronicle is of great utility.

A history of Egypt from the time of the Muslim conquest stretching into the Mamluke period, on a

rather colossal scale, of which we now possess many volumes in print is that by Abu'l-Mahasin Ibn Tangri-Bardi, whose father's Turkish name means "God-given." The style of this author is more classical than that of Ibn Iyas.

We have now finished our survey of the earlier Arabic historical literature: many important works, published and unpublished, have had to be passed over in silence: we have confined ourselves to an account of the chief historians while the process of recording events was developing, stopping at the point where it tends to become mechanical and stereotyped. It would not be reasonable to expect amid this mass of names a great number of masterpieces: ancient Greece supplied very few, for no one regards the Universal History of Diodorus Siculus as a masterpiece, and large numbers of the treatises belonging to this category, of which some have survived in large portions, others are known only by fragments, whereas others have perished entirely, were clearly of mediocre merit, though for the most part of value for the information which they preserved. In quantity and variety the Arabic historical composition was certainly not inferior to that of Greece, having indeed a far larger area to cover: and if it exhibits few works which display brilliant intellectual ability, or which are likely to acquire any wide popularity in translation, we must set in compensation of this the earnest desire which so many of the historians display to ascertain and record the exact truth, and to refrain from distorting it with fanaticism or partisanship.

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